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**INDIRECT IMPOLITENESS –  
IN SEARCH FOR AN ACCOUNT.  
A CORPUS-BASED STUDY**

Praca doktorska  
napisana pod kierunkiem naukowym  
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# INTRODUCTION

The aim of this dissertation is to analyse indirect impoliteness in real-life data, as well as to test the most crucial and influential impoliteness models in light of what is revealed in the data analysis. The data under consideration, included in the appendix, is a collection of 596 conflictive exchanges, which comes from a Polish Internet shop and auctioning service, Allegro.pl. In my analysis, I intend to show the variety of the ‘impoliteness repertoire’ of the shop users, the vast number of the strategies employed and the complexity of their intended meanings, i.e. implicatures, in their linguistic behaviour. Another aim is to present the specific nature of face and intentionality in this kind of communication, with emphasis on the professional aspect of face, and to elaborate on how various attempts at attacking or enhancing this face aspect are carried out.

The first, theoretical chapter is devoted to the most prominent politeness and impoliteness models in pragmatics, whose basic tenets are summarised. The approaches towards politeness are included, because they gave rise to the first studies of impoliteness and therefore are necessary in getting a full picture of this phenomenon. Impoliteness models are divided into two large groups, which derive from two major views on communication and utterance comprehension: the Gricean view and the Relevance-Theoretic and cognitive view, respectively. After a presentation of Grice-based models, I include a summary of the most important critical remarks produced by authors who support Relevance Theory and proceed to discuss the major frameworks of politeness and impoliteness which are cognitive or Relevance Theory-based. The chapter ends with a preliminary critical assessment of the theories and their usefulness for the data analysis.

In the next chapter I provide the most important information about the data, its nature and origin. Next, the tools of analysis are extended to include elements of discourse analysis and major indirectness models. The further step is the data analysis proper, with naming indirect impoliteness strategies and adducing relevant examples of every strategy (or substrategy) from the appendix. In my discussion I point out how these strategies generate a given implicature and how these implicatures influence the shop users’ face, mentioning intentionality and the overlapping of strategies.

The last chapter contains a detailed critical assessment of the key (im)politeness models introduced in Chapter I when juxtaposed with the results of the data analysis and

consequently, what image of indirect impoliteness emerges from the data analysis. The thesis ends with conclusions.



# CHAPTER I

## IMPOLITENESS

### 1. Introduction

In pragmatics, linguistic impoliteness has been a subject of discussion for quite a long time, but only recently has it been given its due recognition. First it was discussed in literature on politeness as ‘deviant’ or simply ‘inappropriate’ linguistic behaviour, and granted the status of just a ‘by-product’ of politeness. Descriptions of ‘rude’ or ‘non-polite’ behaviour (Lakoff 1973), and even taxonomies of face-threatening acts (Brown and Levinson 1987) have come to light, but impoliteness was not analysed as a separate phenomenon with its own rules, characteristics and strategies. One exception here was the early impoliteness model by Lachenicht (1980), who, however, did not apply the term ‘impoliteness’ or even ‘rudeness,’ per se, but chose the label ‘aggravation language’ instead. One of the papers that caused a breakthrough in the treatment of impoliteness was that by Culpeper (1996). His claims that impoliteness is a distinct area of interaction left a mark in pragmatics and incited a change in thinking about impoliteness as such. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that impoliteness studies stem from politeness studies, since in order to know what is ‘inappropriate’ in communication there was a need to define the ‘appropriate.’

This chapter aims at showing various approaches to impoliteness within the two major models of communication in pragmatics: the Gricean model and the model relying on Relevance Theory and cognitive studies. First, it introduces and summarises several politeness models, including those by Lakoff (1977), Leech (1983, 2005) and Brown and Levinson (1987), since the very idea of impoliteness originated on the basis of politeness studies. Later, impoliteness models in Grice-based pragmatics are discussed: the first impoliteness framework to appear in pragmatics (Lachenicht 1980), and then a major, and definitely more popular, impoliteness model created by Culpeper (1996) and further elaborated on in Culpeper et al. (2003), Culpeper (2005, 2010) and Bousfield (2008). Other Gricean frameworks of impoliteness, like Bravo (2008), Hernández-Flores (2008) and Kaul

de Marlangeon (2008) are also taken into consideration. Then, the chapter presents drawbacks of Grice-based impoliteness models as seen by Relevance Theorists and scholars who favour a cognitive approach towards communication. Next, it overviews major Relevance Theoretic politeness models by Watts (2003), Escandell-Vidal (1996, 1998a) and Jary (1998), discussing the phenomenon of impoliteness in each one. Subsequently, it summarises an impoliteness model within Relevance Theory as presented in Meakins (2001), and other Relevance Theory-based, or cognitive, approaches in Locher and Watts (2008), and Terkourafi (2008). Another aim of the chapter is to address the treatment of impoliteness within the Relevance Theoretic Comprehension Procedure (Wilson 2006). Apart from impoliteness and its mechanics, the analysis focuses on face and facework, power, intention and intentionality.

## **2. Impoliteness within Gricean pragmatics**

In Grice (1975), the author does not really discuss politeness, or impoliteness, in greater detail. The only mention of the term ‘politeness’ in “Logic and Conversation” appears as a side remark on the Cooperative Principle (CP):

"There are, of course, all sorts of other maxims (aesthetic, social, or moral in character), such as “Be polite,” that are also observed by participants in talk exchanges, and these may also generate nonconventional implicatures. The conversational maxims, however, and the conversational implicatures connected with them, are specifically connected (I hope) with the particular purposes that talk (and so, talk exchange) is adapted to serve and is primarily employed to serve" (1975: 28).

However brief and sketchy this quote might seem, apparently Grice is one of the first authors to notice the implicit rules and conventions in language use, which stem from the need to be polite and civil. Unfortunately, the author does not tackle the subject of politeness and appropriateness in his later works; however, Grice’s theory of conversation and the CP itself (albeit not without criticisms and suggestions of modification) serve as the source of three major politeness models - by Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983, 2005) and Brown and Levinson (1987), the last one being the most influential and reworked in later politeness and impoliteness frameworks.

Lakoff (1973) is credited for the first theory of politeness as such, although it is now considered incomplete and sketchy compared with the two later models. In her framework (or its early version), she applies the maxim-based approach devised by Grice and formulates two major maxims: *Be clear* and *Be polite*, which she believes to be opposites, as well as three sub-maxims: *Don't Impose*, *Give Options* and finally *Make A* (i.e. the hearer-A.W.) *feel good*, adding that "a polite action is such because it is in accord with the dictates of one or more of Rules 1, 2, 3 as is a polite utterance." Politeness is understood as a means of avoiding offense (Lakoff 1973: 297-298), or as she states later (Lakoff 1979: 64), of reducing friction in conversation. In Lakoff (1989) she explores the topic further by distinguishing between three kinds of behaviour: polite, non-polite and rude. Polite utterances comply with politeness rules "whether or not they are expected in a particular discourse type" (Lakoff 1989: 103), while non-politeness is defined as "behaviour that does not conform to politeness rules, used where the latter are not expected" (ibid.). Finally, rude behaviour is defined as the absence of politeness (not conveying politeness) when it is expected (ibid.).

Leech (1983) views the CP as somewhat imperfect and incomplete, and proposes the Politeness Principle (PP) as its vital supplement. The PP postulates that the speaker should "[m]aximise the expression of polite beliefs" (Leech 1983: 81) and "[m]inimise the expression of impolite beliefs" (ibid.) in conversation. At times, there occurs a clash between the two principles, e.g. when the speaker is compelled to be truthful (and observe the Maxim of Quality) and is confronted with the necessity to tell a lie in a social situation (and observe the PP). In such cases, the CP is suspended for the sake of politeness. Hence the main function of the PP is to 'help out' the CP in order to avoid friction in conversation. Attached to the PP are a number of other principles and maxims of varying statuses and ranks, such as the Tact Maxim, the Generosity Maxim, the Irony Principle, the Banter Principle etc. Leech also introduces scales with parameters between which the speaker has to move when tailoring his contribution to the needs of the actual interaction: the 'cost/benefit' scale, the 'praise/ dispraise' scale, etc.

In Leech (2005), the author ultimately rejects the PP and its subordinate principles and maxims, claiming that it is no longer workable and applicable in all cultures. The framework is replaced with the Grand Strategy of Politeness (GSP). It is meant to be more universal and

therefore supposed to remove the Western, or European bias of which the PP has been accused.

All of those models have been, indisputably, very useful and influential in later research on politeness. However, in this chapter, I wish to focus mainly on Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), since in several impoliteness frameworks, this very model has been treated as the starting point for analysis.

In their findings, Brown and Levinson rely on two important sources: firstly, Goffman's (1955) observations about social interaction, including face considerations vs. society and its requirements and expectations. Secondly, they build on the theory of speech acts introduced by Austin (1962) and then elaborated on and amended in Searle's (1975) discussion of indirect speech acts.

The authors assume that every language user, or a Model Person (an entity modelled on the basis of Chomsky's Native Speaker), has a face. The term 'face' first appears in Goffman ([1967] 1999: 306-307), and is defined as "a social image one effectively claims for himself" (Brown and Levinson 1987: 61). Goffman himself derives the concept of 'face' from the Chinese concept 'diu lian,' read as 'the way we are perceived in society, or an image we wish to have in the eyes of others' ([1967] 1999: 306-307). Having adopted this concept, Brown and Levinson divide it into positive and negative face. Positive face stands for the need to be accepted, liked and respected as a member of a group (Brown and Levinson 1987: 62), and negative face corresponds to the need to be independent, distant and free from any imposition (ibid.), and stems from the need to "maintain claims of territory and self-determination" (1987: 70). Each face aspect has a set of needs and preferences, or 'face wants.' In interaction, face turns out to be vulnerable and prone to attacks and abuse, referred to as threats. Hence the key term 'Face Threatening Act' (FTA) - a speech act meant to threaten, offend or damage either positive or negative face. In their analysis, the authors employ several parameters, or variables: power (P), social distance (D), relative ranking of the imposition ( $R_x$ ) and the weightiness of an FTA in a given culture (W), a sum of all the previous parameters (1987: 76); the overall formula is presented below:

$$W = D(S,H) + P(H,S) + R_x$$

In order to minimise or redress possible threats, five strategies are employed (Brown and Levinson 1987: 60). The first one is not committing the FTA at all. If the speaker decides to do the FTA, they may do so off-record, which is the second strategy, or on record. When they choose the on record option, they can commit the FTA without any redress, which constitutes the third, Bald on Record strategy, or employ some redressive action, aimed at saving face.<sup>1</sup> Acts that save, or enhance, positive face, are classified as positive politeness (the fourth strategy), whereas acts that enhance the negative face belong to the category of negative politeness (the fifth strategy). A couple of positive politeness strategies are: using in-group identity markers, nicknames, joking, using slang, jargon, expressing agreement etc. (1987: 101-129). Negative politeness, in turn, comes down to "self-effacement, formality and restraint" (1987: 70) and is avoidance-based. It can be observed in strategies like: conventional indirectness, mitigation, minimising imposition, apologising (1987: 132-168).

Brown and Levinson's theory has served as a starting point for several impoliteness models, which will be discussed in greater detail. My overview starts from the very first impoliteness model by Lachenicht (1980), now forgotten and rarely quoted,<sup>2</sup> proceeds to impoliteness models (and their amendments) by Culpeper and Bousfield, and finishes with a collection of views on impoliteness which focus on Bravo's (1999) approach: Bravo (2008), Hernández-Flores (2008) and Kaul de Marlangeon (2008).

## 2.1. Lachenicht (1980)

One of the first models which discusses impoliteness in language as a separate phenomenon is that by Lachenicht (1980). As he explains:

"It is important to study not only the socially positive, but also the socially negative. Just as we cannot attain an adequate appreciation of *value* without an understanding of rubbish (...) so we cannot attain an appreciation of the positive uses of language without an understanding of invective. The one complements the other" (1980: 680).

In his study, he does not use the terms 'impoliteness' or 'rudeness' verbatim, preferring the term 'aggravating language.' It is defined as specific language the speaker uses when

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<sup>1</sup> This gives rise to Face Saving Acts, meant to counteract face threat and emphasise the given face aspect. Such acts are also defined as Face Flattering Acts by Kerbrat-Orecchioni (2004).

<sup>2</sup> There are a few exceptions in this respect, including Bousfield (2008).

attempting to hurt, or damage, the addressee. The effect of ‘hurting’ is attained via attacking either the positive face by "conveying that the addressee is not liked and does not belong" (Bousfield 2008: 83, after Lachenicht 1980: 607) or the negative face by "interfering with the addressee’s freedom of action" (Bousfield 2008: 83, after Lachenicht 1980: 607). Consequently, Lachenicht (1980: 619) presents four superstrategies, which derive from, and can be combined with, Brown and Levinson’s (1978) model and taxonomy. The order of the superstrategies is not incidental: he lists them from the most threatening to the least threatening. The first, Off-Record, or indirect superstrategy, is applied when confronting a powerful addressee; the next one, direct Bald on Record, has been taken from Brown and Levinson (1978). The last two superstrategies are positive and negative aggravation. Positive aggravation occurs in conflictive situations between friends and intimates and aims at signalling that "the addressee is not approved of, is not esteemed, does not belong, and will not receive cooperation" (Lachenicht 1980: 619). In turn, negative aggravation, used for more socially distant addressees, is meant to "impose on the addressee, to interfere with his freedom of action, and to attack his social position and the basis of his social situation" (ibid.). Both positive and negative aggravation account for the effect of hurting the addressee and are accompanied by a list of strategies. As the author points out, the strategies can and do combine in interaction.

There are two major positive aggravation strategies: ‘denying common ground’<sup>3</sup> and ‘conveying that *s* (the speaker) and *h* (the hearer) are not co-operators’ (Lachenicht 1980: 634). Each of them is further divided into substrategies and sub-substrategies (ibid.). Examples of the first strategy components are: conveying that *h* is not liked (with sub-substrategies such as: conveying dislike for *h* and *h*’s things, using non-valid imperatives, offending the sensibility and beliefs *h* has, wishing them ill, using sarcasm) and denying in-group membership and opinions (here, the lower strategies are: ‘use negative politeness,’ ‘deny in-group status,’ etc.). The second strategy is made of several lesser strategies as well: not taking *h*’s wants into account (the substrategies being: ignoring *h*, interrupting their speech, showing disinterest in their projects) denying reflexivity (here we may distinguish two tactics: ‘don’t give or ask’ and ‘use negative politeness’ and denying *h*’s wants, where one substrategy, ‘refuse,’ is mentioned. The strategies are likely to overlap as some substrategies, e.g. ‘use negative politeness’ appear under more than one heading (ibid.).

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<sup>3</sup> Single quotation marks are used in this dissertation after the original authors or when linguistic expressions are mentioned and not used.

Negative aggravation is also divided into two chief strategies, ‘communicate the ability and want to coerce *h*’ and ‘coerce and impinge on *h*’ (Lachenicht 1980: 658). The first strategy consists of two substrategies: ‘stress and increase *s*’s power’ (further subdivided into: indirectness, questioning, using speech of powerful persons, insisting on *h* being humble) and ‘minimise *h*’s power’ (the lower strategies being: teasing, baiting, deflating, inappropriate positive politeness) (ibid.). The second key strategy, ‘coerce and impinge on *h*’ is made of three substrategies: challenging (here, we have e.g. direct and indirect challenges, disagreeing and contradicting), increasing imposition and finally using force, where one lower strategy, ‘use threats and violence’ is mentioned (ibid.).

## **2.2. Culpeper (1996, 2005, 2010), Culpeper et al. (2003)**

Culpeper (1996) also calls for the treatment of impoliteness as a separate mechanism in communication, with its own aims and strategies. In his view, the main objective of linguistic impoliteness is, firstly, to promote social disharmony and disequilibrium in cooperation and conversation. Secondly, he claims that impoliteness is produced by the speaker(s) in order to attack the hearer’s (or other’s) face (Culpeper 1996: 350). He classifies impolite acts (or FTAs) into five superstrategies. The first one is Bald-on-Record Impoliteness, a counterpart of Brown and Levinson’s Bald-on-Record Politeness superstrategy. The second and third one are positive and negative impoliteness, which is, again, a mirror reflection of Brown and Levinson’s (1987) division into positive and negative politeness. Within each of these two types, he then lists multiple strategies which offend the given aspect of the hearer’s face. A few examples of positive impoliteness strategies are: ‘ignore/snub the other,’ ‘disassociate from the other,’ ‘be disinterested,’ ‘seek disagreement,’ ‘call the other names’ (Culpeper 1996: 358-359), whereas negative impoliteness strategies include: ‘frighten,’ ‘condescend, scorn and ridicule,’ ‘invade the other’s space’ etc. (Culpeper 1996: 359). The fourth superstrategy is sarcasm, or mock-politeness. The term is used in lieu of ‘irony,’ which the author consciously rejects and disclaims as being more connected to literature than language usage. However, he bases this superstrategy on Leech’s (1983) interpretation of irony. The last superstrategy is withholding politeness in contexts where it is expected.

Culpeper also notices a small minority of acts that will threaten the face of the hearer in all circumstances, regardless of the context or the amount of redress and mitigation involved, or of the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. Examples of such acts are remarks on the hearer's antisocial behaviour (Culpeper 1996: 351).

In several respects, the typology used by Culpeper overlaps with that in Lachenicht. Both scholars employ the term 'sarcasm' in their typologies, but rank it differently: for Lachenicht, sarcasm constitutes just a substrategy, while for Culpeper it is a crucial superstrategy. Moreover, both formulate their strategies in a similar way, Culpeper's phrasing being more descriptive and straightforward.

In Culpeper et al. (2003), the author observes that superstrategies from Culpeper (1996) need not occur in isolation, as they are likely to mix and overlap, and thus he revisits his framework. Moreover, in his data analysis he suggests that banter does not always provoke impoliteness (Culpeper et al. 2003: 1567-1568).<sup>4</sup>

In Culpeper (2005), the author also responds to accusations and criticisms posed to his original framework and formulates a few more claims about what impoliteness is not: it is not incidental, it is never unintentional, it should not be equalled with bald-on-record politeness, and does not comprise banter (Culpeper 2005: 36-38). In light of these claims, a new, revisited definition of impoliteness is suggested: "[i]mpoliteness comes about when (1) the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally, or (2) the hearer perceives and/or constructs behavior as intentionally face-attacking, or a combination of (1) and (2)" (Culpeper 2005: 38).

The paper also proposes refined and reworked definitions of three notions: indirect, or off-record impoliteness, sarcasm and withholding politeness. Off-record impoliteness has become a superstrategy, replacing sarcasm, and is defined as a situation where "the FTA is performed by means of an implicature but in such a way that one attributable intention

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<sup>4</sup> The author quotes the observations on banter in Labov (1972a), Kochman (1983), and Eder (1990), which are conflictive, to shed light on one example from the data, and concludes that in this case, banter is ritualistic and belongs to a certain activity type (Levinson 1992). Later on, in Culpeper (2005: 37), the author excludes banter from the category of linguistic impoliteness.



clearly outweighs any others" (Culpeper 2005: 44). Sarcasm, in turn, has been singled out as "metastrategic" and therefore quite different from other superstrategies (ibid.).

What is more, apart from Brown and Levinson's face division, he favours Spencer-Oatey's (2002) face considerations and 'rapport management' as being more empirically grounded than any other face models devised in response to Brown and Levinson's dichotomy (Culpeper 2005: 39-40). In his analysis, he also applies the concepts of Quality Face and Social Identity Face, taken from Spencer-Oatey's model (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540-542).<sup>5</sup>

Finally, Culpeper (2010) deals with the problem of conventionality of expressions commonly classified as impolite.

### **2.3. Bousfield (2008)**

Drawing on Culpeper's - and partly Lachenicht's - research and typology, Bousfield (2008) develops the existing impoliteness framework and suggests some improvements. To begin with, he claims, along with Harris (1984), that positive and negative face attacks do co-occur in real interaction, both types of impoliteness overlap and the boundary between them is quite fuzzy (Bousfield 2008: 94, 143). Consequently, he regards the positive/negative dichotomy as unnecessary and "superfluous" (Bousfield 2008: 94), as it has already been demonstrated in literature that positive and negative face strategies co-occur in interaction on a regular basis (ibid., also Culpeper et al., 2003). He also suggests a return to Goffman (1955) and his findings about face being "public property" and "on loan from society," highly volatile and dependent on other members of society, and finally multiplied by the number of interactants (the concept of self is important and influential understood as self-worth established thanks to previous encounters). When the reality encountered does not really match our expectations, there are tensions that require our reassessment of our standing, position etc. in society. The result is impoliteness and its manipulation, or verbal aggression.

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<sup>5</sup> In Spencer-Oatey's terms, Quality Face corresponds to "our fundamental desire for people to evaluate us positively in terms of our personal qualities, e.g. our confidence, abilities, appearance etc.," while Social Identity Face (renamed from Identity Face from 2000) is linked to "our fundamental desire for people to acknowledge and uphold our social identities or roles, e. g., as group leader, valued customer, close friend" (2000: 14, 2002: 540-542). Her model is described later in my discussion of face in chapter III.

Stressing the need for reconceptualising impoliteness (e.g. Bousfield 2008: 142), he suggests its working definition as a combination of intentionally gratuitous and conflictive face-threatening acts. Those acts have to be, firstly, unmitigated and secondly, deliberately aggressive; crucially, they need to be comprehended by the hearer and the impolite intention should not be perceived by only one part (Bousfield 2008: 72). Noticing the problematic nature of intention and intentionality, Bousfield refers to the readings of these concepts presented by Culpeper et al. (2003) and Jay's (1992, 2000). In his view, impoliteness has to be triggered by some Offending Event (from Jay 1992). Formally speaking, every Offending Event consists of Behaviour, Language, Intentionality and Damage, or, in other words, is a sum of social rules, requirements, constraints and conditions relevant both to the speaker and to the hearer, as well as the physical setting.

Bousfield suggests treating his model as "an adaptable adjunct to the existing models of face" (Bousfield 2008: 96), and builds upon the distinction between on-record impoliteness and off-record impoliteness. The first type of impoliteness will: attack the face of an interactant, construct the hearer's face in a non-harmonious way and finally, deny the expected face wants. The second, off-record (indirect) type, whose definition is taken from Culpeper (2005: 44), relies on sarcasm or withholding politeness in contexts when it is expected. Here, his framework differs from that by Culpeper, as he treats withholding politeness as a sub-tactic and not a superstrategy. He claims that it should be viewed as off-record, being 'conspicuous by its absence,' though this provokes a question whether the absence of politeness is actually intended to be impolite (Bousfield 2008: 123). As he stresses, "the mutual exclusivity of on/off-record superstrategies is contextually dictated as being in complementary distribution. However, multiple FTAs can also represent a collection of mixed on- and off-record impoliteness strategies" (Bousfield 2008: 96). In turn, sarcasm falls under the category of indirect impoliteness, unlike in Culpeper's typology (there, it is no longer a superstrategy, or even a strategy due to its metastrategic nature).

His empirical study leads to a classification of strategies, in which he adopts some terms from Culpeper's taxonomy and extends or re-names others, seeing problems with their diversified nature. His understanding of sarcasm (Bousfield 2008: 118-123) is slightly different from that in Culpeper (1996): he views it not only as 'mock-politeness' (which would be close to Leech's reading), arguing that the interpretation of sarcasm is dependent on the context. In fact, on certain occasions sarcasm does serve as a face-enhancement mechanism, and therefore should be called 'mock-mock-politeness,' or 'double

ostentatiousness.’ It is too blatant to be treated as a genuine face attack, as it reinforces the ties between the speaker and the hearer (Bousfield 2008: 121). Also, he refuses to treat banter as genuine impoliteness because of its qualities of strengthening the bonds between interactants (Bousfield 2008: 137), where his line of thinking is similar to Culpeper’s (2005). Bousfield also adds that individual impoliteness strategies rarely occur on their own with just one clear meaning (considering both the context and the co-text), and that not all of them are of the same rank and order. The result is linguistic impoliteness understood as a multi-layered and multi-modal phenomenon.

Bousfield also suggests a re-reading of Grice and his CP, postulating (after Thomas 1986) that it is more economical to view the CP as a principle of linguistic cooperation. Additionally, he stresses that being linguistically cooperative is the starting point for the communication of impoliteness, i.e. a lack of *social* cooperation (Bousfield 2008: 21-32).

Another important problem with impoliteness that Bousfield addresses is the way it builds up and pans out in discourse, not only at the level of one single utterance. That is why in his data analysis he identifies several stages of impoliteness development, both at the utterance level and at the discoursal level. These are: utterance/discourse ‘beginnings,’ the pre-impoliteness stage, utterance/discourse ‘middles’ and utterance/discourse ‘ends’ (Bousfield 2008: 145-221).

The utterance ‘beginnings,’ or pre-impoliteness sequences, are also referred to in literature as pre-sequences (Atkinson and Drew 1979, Levinson 1983, Merritt 1976, Mey 2001). Their function is to prepare for impoliteness and to ‘set the stage.’ They may take the form of pre-announcements, pre-invitations, pre-requests, pre-threats or other attention-getters (Bousfield 2008: 147, after Mey 2001: 144, Levinson 1983: 345-356). In terms of discoursally shaped impoliteness, they form an offending event (Bousfield 2008: 183-187, after Jay 1992) that triggers the expression of impolite beliefs. Crucially, the impoliteness-favouring context must have been invoked previously, so that the speaker finds it provocative enough to respond with impoliteness; here, Bousfield’s observation is in line with findings in Culpeper et al. (2003), and Corsaro and Rizzo (1990). Logically, the offending event is usually an aggressive antecedent, which threatens or damages some aspect of the speaker’s face and involves one or more of the offending factors. There are some

salient elements of utterances that offend the speakers, which never act alone and occur in combinations.

In his discussion of utterance 'middles' the author introduces another distinction, namely between simple and complex impoliteness (Bousfield 2008: 154-155). Simple impoliteness is close to Culpeper's understanding of a strategy (1996), while complex impoliteness boils down to a "combined (co-)realisation of impoliteness strategies within a single utterance or turn-at-talk" (Bousfield 2008: 155). Importantly, strategies do not occur in isolation and are intertwined (ibid.).

The discourse 'middle' (Bousfield: 187-206) is any reaction to an offending event, continuing the confrontation and, as Locher (2004) stresses as well, the act of the participants' provoking or propelling each other along as the conflict unfolds. Faced with the impolite / face threatening or damaging act, the speaker has two options: 'do not respond' or 'respond.' Here, the first option is rather difficult to examine because of a number of its possible meanings: face defence, the wish to offend the hearer, the lack of comprehension of his attack or simply not hearing it. What ensues after the silence is crucial in deciding if the silence is important for impoliteness itself. The second option, 'respond,' is further divided into two subcategories, 'accept' or 'counter' the face threat. If the speaker chooses the first possibility, this usually signals an apology or admitting responsibility and also the end of the confrontation. If, however, they choose the second one, they move within a pair of two opposing scales: 'offensive' vs. 'defensive' scale, so that their response is a combination of varying degrees of those two parameters. Within this division, various strategies are listed: abrogation (highly defensive), dismissal, ignoring the face attack (either implicitly or explicitly), pleading or opting out. However, sometimes in the speaker's reaction offensiveness and defensiveness do not co-occur (Bousfield 2008: 203- 206).

Utterance ends (Bousfield 2008: 166-167), in the author's data, include e.g. forcing some feedback in the form of interrogatives (*Do you understand?*) right after the face damage (e.g. criticizing or intimidating the hearer), and their impact is also damaging, as they reinforce the previous impoliteness.

As far as discourse ends are concerned, there are also several options: one may submit to his/her opponent, the two parties might reach a compromise, end up in a stand-off, or lastly, some dominant third parties might step in and intervene (Bousfield 2008: 206-219).

#### **2.4. Bravo (2008), Bolivar (2008), Hernández-Flores (2008), Kaul de Marlangeon (2008)**

In their data-based analyses of politeness and impoliteness within Spanish and Swedish-speaking communities, these authors all apply yet another dualistic model of face, which they claim to be universal and filled in with cultural categories and values valid for a given society. The origins of this model are traced back to the critical standpoint Bravo et al. take on Brown and Levinson (1987). Like many others, they accuse this politeness framework of ethnocentrism (specifically Anglocentrism) and universalism (Bravo 2008: 566-568, 586-590). Moreover, they blame politeness studies for focusing mainly on negative face (Bravo 2008: 585-586).

Originally devised by Bravo (1999), the model presupposes that face is made of two aspects: autonomy face and affiliation face. These terms derive from universal human needs and are thus recognized in every culture. These two categories, created as an alternative to Brown and Levinson's dual model of face, are meant to take face considerations in different cultures one step further, towards a more universal approach. Autonomy refers to how a speaker wishes to see themselves be seen by others as an individual, with a contour of their own inside a group or community, while affiliation is linked to how they wish to see themselves with respect to what identifies them with a group (Bravo 2008: 588).

As Hernández-Flores (2008) advocates, Bravo's dichotomy is more successful than Brown and Levinson's (1987), as autonomy and affiliation "do not implicate social meanings (...) or sets of communicative strategies in any universal way" (Hernández-Flores 2008: 694). They are rather connected with universal needs of a human as either part of a group or an individual (Hernández-Flores 2008: 693-694). The 'emptiness' of these categories is explained by the fact that each culture views and reads them differently. For instance, in Spanish culture and society the void notions of 'autonomy' and 'affiliation' will be filled with the concepts of self-affirmation and *confianza* (trust), respectively. Both these aspects then belong to the so-called 'basic face,' or "a set of socio-cultural contents and a configuration of forms which are socially accepted and presumed to be known amongst its members" (Bravo 2008: 588, after Bravo 1993, 1996, Hernández-Flores 1999, 2002, 2003; Contreras 2004, Bernal 2005, 2007). This set of categories comprises "a complicated set of realities perceived by the speakers" (Bravo 2008: 589). The precondition of basic face and

its components in operation as methodological tools is that they are empty, open and dynamic. Face itself is composed of three elements: firstly, interpersonal relationships in the presentation of self in society, secondly, expectations of others from the speaker, thirdly, their personal and social identity. Bravo (after Bravo 2002) also posits that within every culture there exists socio-cultural face, which then changes into role face. The role face is divided into individual face and group face, each of which is further split into autonomy and affiliation subcategories. Like 'basic face', all of these concepts are empty, open and dynamic, waiting to be filled in with values, terms and concepts valid for a given culture or community (Bravo 2008: 567).

#### **2.4.1. Bravo (2008)**

In Bravo (2008), the author calls for a reconsideration of the whole theoretical view on politeness in order to create adequate categories and criteria for corpus analysis that would address socio-cultural factors, differences and idiosyncracies. She accuses Brown and Levinson's model of allowing too much contextual variation and thus causing a dichotomy between the universal and the culturally relative, and stipulates examining politeness from a socio-cultural pragmatic perspective, i.e. one that features the interconnections between language and society (Bravo 2008: 586-587). As regards face considerations, Bravo supports Goffman (1957) and Kerbrat-Orecchioni (1997) in their view on conversation as a conflictive space, and she interprets facework as a socio-psychological concept located on the socio-economical plane (Bravo 2008: 584).

She recalls one of the main tenets of her communication theory, stated in Bravo (2004), postulating that speakers are endowed with interpretative resources coming from their social background and communicative experiences, either group or individual experiences. These resources are then projected in emergent meanings in interaction, also accounting for new alternatives. As a socio-cultural phenomenon, then, politeness constantly reinvents, reshapes and modifies itself in interlocution as shared knowledge of the basic, underlying socio-cultural contents allow the users to interpret the social effects of a given situation (Bravo 2004: 587).

Bravo's understanding of impoliteness seems to agree with those in Culpeper (1996) and Bousfield (2008): "a communicative activity that aims at damaging the interlocutor's face [which] follows norms and social codes which, supposedly, are known by speakers and

considers in all contexts detriment to the interlocutor. The effect of this activity in interaction is interpersonally negative, from what is interpreted that an activity of impoliteness has been produced" (Bravo 2008: 570).

#### **2.4.2. Hernández-Flores (2008)**

Hernández-Flores (2008) provides an empirical analysis of polite and impolite interaction in a televised debate. Her chief observation is that in some cases behaviour objectively viewed as impolite does not have to be read as such within the particular context or communicative genre (after Luckmann 1995 and Linell 1998); in fact, it could just be labelled an unmarked subtype of politic behaviour (Watts 1989, 2003). As she explains, "the interpretation of possible (im)polite interactions depends on how the communicative genre is described with regard to the situational context, the interactants' roles and the communicative goals whereby apparent (im)polite strategies may not be interpreted as such (...) communicative strategies that are used for being (im)polite do not necessarily achieve an (im)polite effect" (Hernández-Flores 2008: 702-703). Also, she claims that reading an utterance as impolite hinges upon whether we consider it from an individual or group perspective; some instances of impolite acts could possibly threaten group face without putting the individual face at stake, and conversely (Hernández-Flores 2008: 703).

#### **2.4.3. Kaul de Marlangeon (2008)**

Kaul de Marlangeon (2008) proposes yet another understanding of impoliteness within the same model of face dichotomy. Her first, general claim is that both politeness and impoliteness are "situated at the intersection of language and reality" (2008: 736). However, she adds that impoliteness, unlike politeness, has no pre-established patterns of behaviour which stem from parameters given by society, which is why we should read impoliteness as a conscious and voluntary movement away from the above-mentioned parameters.

In her analysis of impoliteness in institutional vs. non-institutional contexts, she builds on the notions of fustigation impoliteness, refractoriness and exacerbated affiliation (Kaul de Marlangeon 2005). She terms fustigation impoliteness, or 'whipping impoliteness,' as 'strategic verbal aggression' executed by the speaker towards the hearer, as well as voluntary and conscious efforts meant to damage the hearer's face, with the intention of

confronting, or taking part in, some challenging *discursive* situation (Kaul de Marlangeon 2008: 737). Within this specific behaviour, the majority of speech acts are classified as 'on record' as they guarantee confrontation in discourse. The first component of fustigation impoliteness, i.e. refractoriness, is explained as exacerbated autonomy of considering oneself - and being considered by others - as opponent to a given group. This term might be viewed as a counterpart of 'affiliation' in Bravo (2008). If a speaker is refractory, they attack the hearer as part of a given group, so they firstly have to attack the values of the group the hearer identifies himself with and secondly, implicitly defend those endorsed by their group (Kaul de Marlangeon 2008: 737-738). The second component, exacerbated affiliation, boils down to seeing oneself and being seen as part of the group, with the right to choose impoliteness in its defence, and is introduced as a counterpart to Bravo's (2008) autonomy factor (Kaul de Marlangeon 2008: 737). Both exacerbated affiliation and refractoriness are seen as key motivations in fustigation impoliteness, which can be analysed from two angles: defensive and offensive. Importantly, she stresses the individual nature of impoliteness, which varies from one speaker to another. Therefore, analysed within group behaviour, it should be recognized as a sum of individual impoliteness 'styles' and behaviours of all its members (Kaul de Marlangeon 2008: 736).

The author points out a 'technical' difference between institutional vs. non-institutional contexts after Renkema (2004: 253), stressing that institutions act as social channelling systems of human behaviour and the middle ground between individuals and society, helping them shape and maintain society in a relatively stable way. Two institutional contexts are examined: a political debate and a fragment of army recruit training (after Culpeper 1996), where impoliteness is bounded, public and carried out by those who act on behalf of a group sharing the same system of values (Kaul de Marlangeon 2008: 738). In contrast, in non-institutional contexts there is no assumption of any pre-established social code, and relationships therein are relatively fluid, so "impoliteness appears as a non-bounded phenomenon of private nature" (Kaul de Marlangeon 2008: 742). This does not, however, exclude ideological motives or struggle for power involved in these exchanges, even if power is of a rather situational and dynamic nature (Kaul de Marlangeon 2008: 747). In her two examples of non-institutional settings, impoliteness arises when there is an inequality of power, and one of the parties dares to claim power. Refractoriness is present in criticisms, insults, reprimands, reproaches, accusations and the like. She also notes intra-group impoliteness, signalled by the lack of closeness, disassociation from the group, and



the speaker's conviction that his beliefs should be superior to those of other group members (Kaul de Marlangeon 2008: 744).

On the basis of one particular set of data, i.e. a fragment of a play, the author finally observes that fustigation impoliteness in non-institutional contexts stems from a basic biological need: a primary intention to 'make yourself heard' and striving to make your viewpoint the dominant one, which is a very fertile ground for aggression turning into insults (2008: 748).

### **3. Politeness within Relevance Theory**

#### **3.1. Criticism of Gricean accounts**

As has been shown, Brown and Levinson's model of politeness has been the source of several impoliteness models, but has also gathered several critics that favour a Relevance-Theoretic approach towards politeness and impoliteness. Jary (1998: 2) accuses Brown and Levinson's framework of too much reliance on form and strategy in communicating politeness, and of being "counterintuitive in that it predicts that whenever the so-called polite forms/strategies are used then an additional layer of meaning is necessarily communicated, while our experience as conversationalists tells us that polite forms often go unnoticed by the participants" (ibid.). Escandell-Vidal (1996: 630-631) questions the common assumption that there should be an iconic connection between politeness and indirectness. Watts challenges the theory as well, and poses a lot of questions (2003: 85-116), referring to authors like Ide (1989), Matsumoto (1988), Gu (1990). First, he accuses Brown and Levinson of analysing strategies in isolation from the context and making one-sided judgements, in which one strategy is classified as polite and another one as impolite, while the context itself can always be changed (Watts 2003: 89-92). He also notices that some examples illustrate more than just one strategy, that the authors ignore the discursive struggle for politeness and that analysing data from just three languages is sufficient to label their model universal. Watts suggests that politeness strategies be replaced with facework strategies instead (Watts 2003: 89, 93-95, 117-142). Finally, he states that utterances should be compatible with politeness behaviour in the given situation.

#### **3.2. Watts (1989, 1992)**

In Watts (1989), the author first introduces the notion of ‘politic verbal behaviour,’ which he defines as "socio-culturally determined behaviour towards the goal of establishing and/or maintaining in a state of equilibrium the personal relationships between the individuals of a social group, whether opened or closed, during the ongoing process of interaction" (Watts 1989: 135). Politic behaviour may be verbal or non-verbal. This notion is later on re-labelled ‘politic behaviour’ and further revisited in Watts (1992) and Watts (2003).

In his paper from 1992, Watts considers the need to reconceptualise politeness and suggests replacing the wrongly used term ‘politeness’ with ‘politic behaviour,’ which is unmarked in character. He also opposes the beliefs that politeness is always encoded in e.g. formulaic expressions or address terms, or that politeness is needed in order to reduce friction in conversation (Leech 1983). Instead he argues for a different understanding of politeness, which he derives from eighteenth century writings about the subject, like *The English Theophrastus: or the manners of the age* (1702). Amongst various aspects of politeness discussed in those resources, like refinement, using appropriate vocabulary, proper conduct etc., Watts gives priority to its ‘masking’ function: a way of hiding the speaker’s egocentric (or, at least, not always altruistic) motivations and ends (Watts 1992: 45, 47, 51 etc.) as well as a ‘velvet glove that conceals an iron fist,’ not uncommon in everyday interaction (Watts 1992: 44-45, after Sell 1991: 210-211).

He favours the model by Brown and Levinson (1987), believing that it attempts to delineate some underlying principles of socio-cultural organisation, and criticises frameworks e.g. by Leech (1983) or Fraser and Nolen (1981). Also, he draws on Brown and Levinson’s (1987: 45-47) anthropological observations, which are based on the findings in Malinowski (1923) on the symbolic nature of interpersonal rituals of exchange (‘intimate’ vs. ‘non-intimate’ stuff), or parameters like domination and social distance. Crucially, he focuses on the sacred nature of the social person (the biggest ‘object’ that can be exchanged) and exchanging social persons, which today is most often observable in speech events (Watts 1992:55-58). Claiming that in all languages there exist some forms that symbolise the sacred nature of the social person, he calls for setting up typological universals of language usage on the basis of how different cultures understand the nature of ‘intimate stuff’ and its interaction with social distance and dominance. Those universals do not have to exemplify politeness; however, when they are used inappropriately, the result is non-

politic behaviour<sup>6</sup> (Watts 1992: 56-57). Linguistic politeness is, firstly, always marked and secondly, executed if and only if there is an attempt on the part of *ego* to enhance his/her social status with respect to the other, or *alter* (Watts 1992: 51, 69).

### 3.3. Escandell-Vidal (1996, 1998a)

Escandell-Vidal (1996) advocates a cognitive approach to all social phenomena, including politeness. She distinguishes between two types of knowledge (general vs. specific) and stresses the role of context and frames in understanding politeness. The structure of knowledge is quoted after Schank and Abelson (1977: 37): general knowledge helps to understand or interpret another person's actions because they are also human beings and they are equipped with the same standard needs, while specific knowledge helps to interpret and participate in events we have experienced many times previously, so that we do less processing. An important conclusion about social interaction (and, obviously, politeness) is that "social aspects of communication have to be explained in terms not of inferential patterns working on universal principles, but of the structure and contents of specific knowledge" (Escandell-Vidal 1996: 640). The focus, the author stresses, should not be put on inferential devices, but on the context itself (*ibid.*). A claim could arise here that impoliteness could also be explained in this way. In fact, interpreting an utterance as impolite might be facilitated thanks to our specific knowledge about the event itself.

The author observes that context in Relevance Theory is clearly related to knowledge (Escandell-Vidal 1996: 637). She defines context as a "particular subset of (the whole set of) assumptions held in a particular moment" (Escandell-Vidal 1996: 640).<sup>7</sup> It is internal and selected at the time of interpretation, in accordance with the presumption of optimal relevance.<sup>8</sup> In other words, the context selected by the hearer needs to guarantee the optimally relevant interpretation (Escandell-Vidal 1996: 637). Further on, she notes: "The advantage of using an internal (cognitive) notion of context is that it permits us to give a unified analysis of external factors and internal assumptions. In our minds, previous utterances, extralinguistic situations, encyclopaedic knowledge have all the same status: they

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<sup>6</sup> The term 'impoliteness' as such does not appear in Watts (1992).

<sup>7</sup> This understanding of context comes from Relevance Theory (Sperber and Wilson 1986).

<sup>8</sup> The most important definitions connected with Relevance Theory, i.e. the presumption of optimal relevance, the ostensive stimulus, the Cognitive Principle of Relevance and the Communicative Principle of Relevance, are defined in Chapter II, section 4.2.2.1.

are all internal representations" (Escandell-Vidal 1996: 640).<sup>9</sup> The crucial finding about politeness here is that "it is precisely the internal, cognitive nature of context, of knowledge, which enables us to evaluate something as polite or not without a real situation, so we can assign a 'default politeness value' to an utterance according to our stored assumptions" (Escandell-Vidal 1996: 643). Here, it could be suggested that the notion of impoliteness and its instances, can indeed fit in with these findings.

The third important notion in this cognitive model of politeness is that of a frame, understood, after Tannen's definition, as "a specific, structured set of assumptions" (Tannen 1993: 53), which enables us to read different social phenomena, including politeness, as sets of "culturally determined [and] organized" sets of specific knowledge (Escandell-Vidal 1996: 640). The very term 'frame' is, as she highlights, familiar to and perfectly compatible with Relevance Theory: suffice to recall that, according to Sperber and Wilson (1986), an encyclopaedic entry associated with a concept involves an organized set of related propositions (Sperber and Wilson 1986: 87-88), necessary for interpretation. In Wilson (1993) we come across the notion of scenario, which provides adequate cognitive effects - in accordance with the principle of relevance. Therefore, for a successful interpretation of an utterance, we need frequent exposure to a certain situation. This gives us particular knowledge, which makes some assumptions accessible. The set of assumptions finally produces a ready-made context, which is equal to what a frame does (Escandell-Vidal 1996: 641, after Wilson 1993: 355). She proves that such an approach can explain the so-called 'politeness effect' which results from "(non-fulfilment of [the hearer's] expectations" (ibid.). 'Impoliteness effects' can also be thus explained in RT: utterances which are polite at face value but used as blatantly impolite in some contexts are instances of mention and not use (and the hearer's knowledge needs to make the mismatch manifest (Escandell-Vidal 1996: 641).

In Escandell-Vidal (1998a), the main question under consideration is: How can politeness fit RT? As the author explains, politeness first relies on expectations, which are internal representations about linguistic behaviour. If so, then politeness is also explicable

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<sup>9</sup> Locher (2004: 82) expresses a similar view: "Relevance Theory is an attempt to explain the cognitive process of ostensive stimuli by people. Therefore social dimensions will necessarily be included if participants are defined as social beings who have personal histories, knowledge of frames and norms, and engage in identity negotiations. Contextualization is thus an important key for finding relevance and will accommodate social dimensions and patterns."

in terms of knowledge, because knowledge results from internal expectations. The more an expectation is confirmed, the stronger the causal link, be it natural or – in the case of politeness – conventional. If unexpected stimuli contradict previous expectations or assumptions, we obtain a communicated assumption. In the author's terms, a communicated assumption can be conveyed "[o]nly when (im)politeness is both intentional and overt" (Escandell-Vidal 1998a: 52). So the (im)polite effect results from an overt mismatch between our expectations vs. actual linguistic behaviour, arrived at via the presumption of optimal relevance; therefore the hearer has to use some of his/her previous assumptions to form higher-level explicatures.<sup>10</sup>

The author also states that recognizing politeness does not require any special interpretative competences or decoding abilities, being rather a matter of encyclopaedic knowledge accumulated with experience, to do with contextual effects,<sup>11</sup> most relevantly, information and knowledge about relationships.

Here, we need to assemble an answer to the key question of how impoliteness can be reconciled with the Relevance Theoretic perspective as understood by Escandell-Vidal, as the author does not discuss the subject. However, it can be concluded that, in light of what has been said in both papers about politeness, impoliteness can, without doubt, be accommodated into her view and explained in terms of cognitive frameworks of social interaction.

### 3.4. Jary (1998)

Jary's model of politeness supports some tenets of Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness and also has common elements with cognitive-oriented or Relevance Theory-

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<sup>10</sup> According to Sperber and Wilson (1986: 182), "(I) An assumption communicated by an utterance U is explicit [hence an "explicature"] if and only if it is a development of a logical form encoded by U. [Note: in cases of ambiguity, a surface form encodes more than one logical form, hence the use of the indefinite here, "a logical form encoded by U."] (II) An assumption communicated by U which is not explicit is implicit [hence an "implicature"]. In Wilson and Sperber (1993: 5), the following definition of a higher-level explicature is introduced: "The explicatures of an utterance are constructed by enriching a linguistically encoded logical form to a point where it expresses a determinate proposition (...), and optionally embedding it under a higher-level description: for example, a speech-act description (...), or a propositional attitude description" and these higher-level descriptions are referred to as higher-level explicatures (ibid.).

<sup>11</sup> As Escandell-Vidal (1998a: 52) explains, "in relevance-theoretic framework, an assumption is relevant in a context when it has some contextual effects in that context (Sperber & Wilson 1986/1995: 122). Thus, to yield contextual effects, an assumption must enter an inferential process in which it combines with other assumptions."

based models (Escandell-Vidal 1996, Watts 1992). He proposes a more accurate picture of politeness that would serve three purposes. Firstly, it would come up with an alternative motivation for politeness itself. Secondly, it should distinguish cases of communication and non-communication of politeness. Thirdly, it would provide a distinction between two situations: a case when expectations of politeness are strategically manipulated vs. a case in which politeness emerges from crafting our utterances so as not to make manifest an assumption that could impair a long-term relationship between the speaker and the hearer (Jary 1998: 1).

Jary calls for a reconsideration of what underlies a politeness theory, and disputes the belief that politeness has to convey an additional layer of meaning, thus challenging Brown and Levinson's model. After Fraser (1990: 234), he argues that politeness is more anticipated than actually communicated. Similarly to Fraser, he also accuses Brown and Levinson of being counterintuitive in their view that politeness should communicate an extra layer of meaning, as in real interaction polite forms tend to go unnoticed. What he supports in Brown and Levinson's theory is the set of variables (P, D, R<sub>x</sub>), and the mitigation of face damage; however, he disagrees with the norm-based approach and speech act theory, i.e. notions which are inconsequential for Relevance Theory (Jary 1998: 2-3).

The author observes that the selection of an appropriate linguistic form or strategy is governed by the speaker's assumptions about his/her relationship with the hearer and the variables presented in Brown and Levinson (1987: 76): power, distance and relative ranking of an FTA and its weightiness (P, D, R, W<sub>x</sub>). The choice in question is only crucial when it causes a change in the mutual cognitive environment (MCE) of both the speaker and the hearer (Jary 1998: 5-7).

Instead of focusing on form and strategy, Jary favours mutual manifestness, cognitive environment and mutual cognitive environment (Jary 1998: 4), which he defines after Sperber and Wilson (1995). An assumption is mutually manifest to an individual at a given time if he is capable of representing it and assessing its probable truth. All those assumptions that are manifest to him form a whole, called his cognitive environment (CE). When assumptions are manifest to two or more participants, the result is their MCE. So, via an ostensive stimulus, the communicator makes manifest the intention to make manifest a

given set of assumptions. In terms of Relevance Theory, we enter a linguistic exchange with mutually manifest assumptions about what is, and what is not, permissible in terms of force or content, which closely corresponds to Watts' politic behaviour (1989).

A change in the CE of the hearer comes about when the speaker chooses a form/strategy that does not fit in with the hearer's expectations. It will be highly relevant to the hearer and serve as evidence that the speaker has just ranked one of the Brown and Levinson's variables incompatibly with the hearer's assumptions; it is then inferred which variable had been mis-ranked. The starting point for communication is a change in the MCE of both the speaker and the hearer. Seemingly 'polite' forms or strategies will only communicate something above and beyond their underlying message if the value of  $W_x$ , does not match the mutually manifest assumption about  $W_x$ . The additional meaning, as Jary states, is communicated only in three cases: first, when there is evidence for the hearer that the assumptions he had deemed mutually manifest were not mutually manifest; second, the speaker intends that to be the case; and third, this intention is mutually manifest (Jary 1998: 6-7).

Similarly to Watts (1989, 1992), Jary notes that politeness occurs with attempts to modify the hearer's CE in the speaker's favour. The author agrees with Watts as regards politic behaviour and the egocentric nature of politeness, or any attempts by our ego to enhance our status with respect to other. However, he criticizes Watts for not mentioning the consequences of whether or not the speaker's polite intentions are communicated, which, along with the speaker's motives, is of crucial importance (Jary 1998: 7-8). In Jary's terms (1998: 8), the polite or the impolite lies in two actions carried out by the hearer: firstly, noticing such an aspect in the speaker's behaviour and secondly, capturing the motivation the speaker believes to be behind it. There are thus two possible conclusions for the hearer: that the speaker holds them in higher or lower regard than the hearer had originally assumed to be mutually manifest. The author presents a figure (Jary 1998: 9) with the mechanisms governing politeness/impoliteness detection, with the role of intention and its attribution.

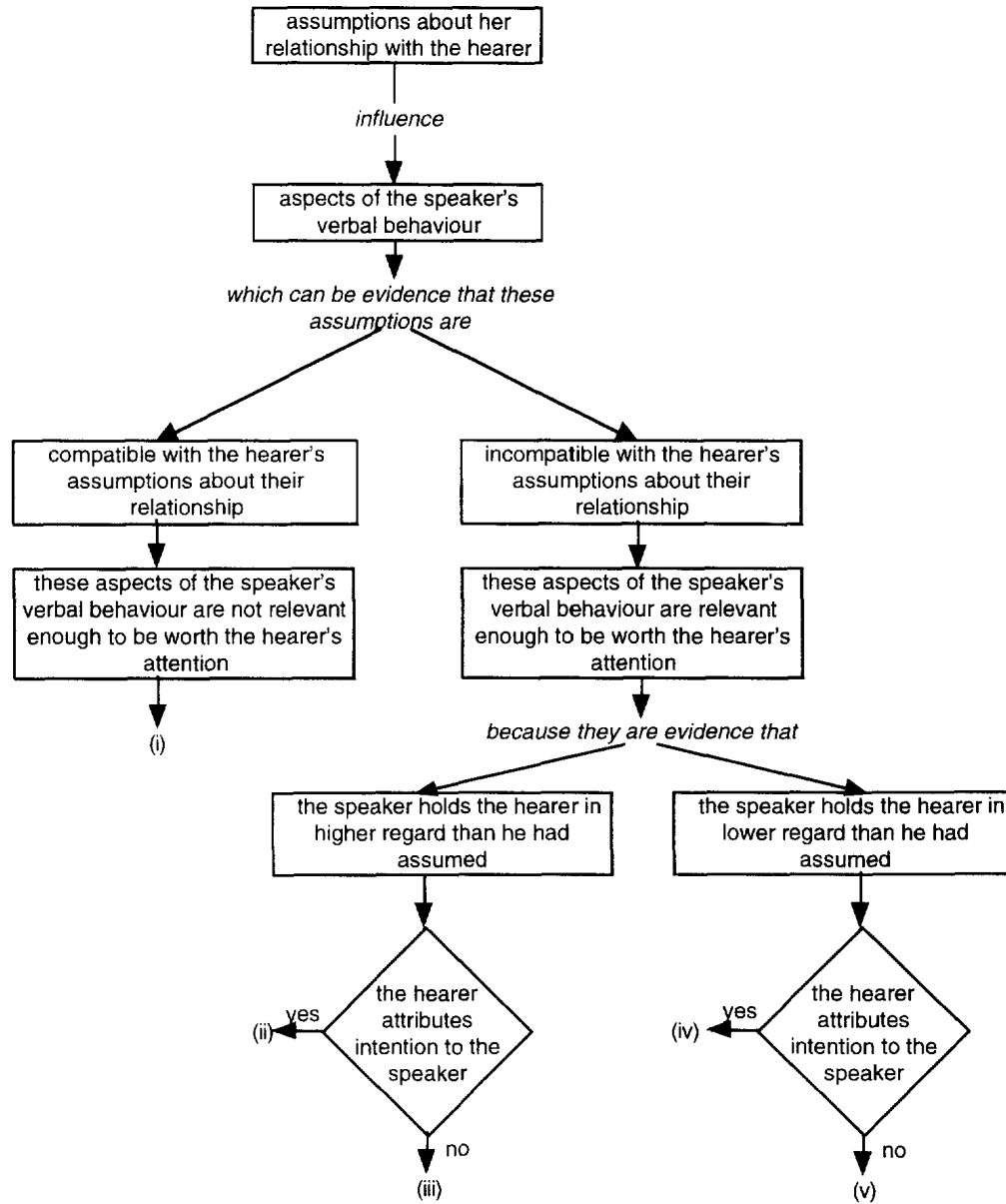


Fig. 1. Routes of interpretation (after Jary 1998: 9)

The starting point of the diagram is the set of assumptions the speaker entertains about her relationship with the hearer. These assumptions impact the aspects of the speaker's linguistic behaviour which can prove that the assumptions are compatible, or incompatible, with the hearer's assumptions about their relationship. The figure then presents five possible routes of interpretation. The first one refers to the state of compatibility of mutual assumptions, and so it is default and unmarked - the linguistic behaviour is not relevant



enough to be worth the hearer's attention and the assumptions held mutually manifest by the hearer are reinforced (Jary 1998: 10). The remaining four routes (Jary 1998: 10-13) refer to the state in which the speaker and the hearer have non-matching, incompatible assumptions about their relationship and, by the same token, their linguistic behaviour is relevant enough to be worth the hearer's attention. They manage to prove that the speaker holds the hearer in higher regard (routes two and three) or lower regard (routes four and five) than he had assumed to be mutually manifest. In route two, the hearer attributes intention to the speaker, and in route three this does not happen. The same rule obtains for routes four and five, respectively. Routes four and five are of most interest to us, since they deal with impoliteness. Route four refers to an attributed intention to offend, stemming from the rational nature of communication and the participants (importantly, banter and irony are excluded from this category). Interestingly, also route two might appear an interesting case of an impolite interpretation of the speaker's behaviour: even though there is evidence that the speaker holds the hearer in higher regard than previously assumed, the hearer can still read their behaviour as insincere, flattering or self-seeking. Route five will cover cases where there was no intention ascribed, so it might deal with an FTA, which the hearer can read as a miscalculation of how the speaker had estimated the P, D, R<sub>x</sub> variables.<sup>12</sup> The author notes (Jary 1998: 13) that routes four and five will rather be avoided by rational speakers, provided that no insult is intended. The speakers should also be "liable to provide evidence as to the esteem in which they hold the hearer" (Jary 1998: 13) in their choice of the form or pragmatic strategy.

The author also proposes two useful distinctions governing our linguistic behaviour. The first one exists between long and short term aims that we have as communicators. The former are meant to persuade the hearer to believe in something, whereas the latter are linked to the fact of remaining or becoming part of a certain group (Jary 1998: 11-12). The second division deals with the implications of our linguistic behaviour, which may be either detrimental or beneficial to the relationship obtaining between the interactants. As speakers, if we have a long-term aim to stay in a given group and maintain our reputation and status, we are obliged to make manifest assumptions that are beneficial to our hearers, since any such assumption made manifest serves as evidence that we hold the hearer in higher regard. However, it does not instantly raise the hearer's position, as there are three conditions to

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<sup>12</sup> Unintentional face threat is discussed in Bousfield (2008), who labels it 'rudeness' as opposed to intentional impoliteness – 'impoliteness' proper, and Terkourafi (2008), who also applies this distinction in the reverse fashion ('rudeness' for intentional FTAs, impoliteness for unintentional FTAs).

fulfil: firstly, the evidence must be relevant, secondly, it should appear to be sincere, thirdly, the hearer has to believe that the evidence adduced really reflects the esteem the speaker holds him in (Jary 1998: 12).

To summarise, in Jary's framework, both impoliteness and politeness are noted only when just one aspect of the speaker's behaviour shows the hearer that the speaker holds him in lower regard. If a choice of a form or a strategy causes a change in the MCE of the participants, then it is marked, crucial and highly relevant to the hearer. Consequently, communication takes place when such a change is intended by the speaker.

### **3.5. Watts (2003)**

Watts (2003) proposes a politeness model that also incorporates and explains the mechanics of impoliteness. The key notions here are: politic behaviour (Watts 1989: 135), the theory of practice, the *habitus*, the understanding of power within Relevance Theory, and the dynamicity of context. Also, it does not aim to be an explanatory or production model; it just sees politeness not as a term in a model of society, but rather focuses on how social members define it. After Eelen (2001), Watts draws a distinction between first-order politeness, or politeness<sub>1</sub>, and second-order politeness, or politeness<sub>2</sub>. The first term refers to the folk, common reading and assessment of what is polite, while the second one signifies the theoretical, academic approach to politeness, focusing mainly on first-order politeness (Watts 2003: 8-12, 47-53, 70-75). He modifies these notions into (im)politeness<sub>1</sub> and (im)politeness<sub>2</sub> (2003: 30-31). His main objective is to propose "a new approach to the study of (im)politeness<sub>1</sub> that focuses more on the perceptions of politeness made by interactants in social practice" (Watts 2003: 168). The two crucial notions are *habitus* and the theory of practice.

The term *habitus* is first used in Bourdieu (1990) where it is explained as the awareness of certain social structures, rules and norms, and the resultant systems of our dispositions (some of them linguistic) based upon previous encounters and experiences (1990: 53). Watts understands it as "the set of dispositions to behave in a manner which is appropriate to the social structures objectified by an individual through her/his experience of social interaction" (Watts 2003: 149). It is closely related to our 'feel for the game' (Watts

2003: 148-149), or a set of rules acquired in the process of socialization, which are adaptable in the course of talk. The exigencies of the *habitus* determine the politic behaviour in a given situation or context. In other words, politic behaviour is closely connected to the kind of *habitus* formed by language users to perform as expected in social practice. When the linguistic behaviour departs from the expected, or politic, form positively or negatively, we can speak of polite or impolite effects. An excess in the 'positive' direction is expressive politeness or, if we take one step further, over-politeness, whereas an excess in the 'negative' direction is impoliteness. In other words, politic behaviour is unnoticed, or default, in everyday interaction and only departures, or violations, attract the hearer's attention (Watts 2003: 156-165).

Bourdieu (1990: 52) also explains the workings of the theory of practice: "the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorded, and, contrary to intellectual idealism, that the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions,"<sup>13</sup> and Watts relies and elaborates on Bourdieu's findings (Watts 2003: 147-151). For Watts, (im)politeness and its dynamic nature constitute a crucial part of the theory of practice (Watts 2003: 160-161).

Watts opposes inherent (im)politeness and is sceptical about politeness structures (Watts 2003: 168-200). Instead, he favours the specificity and changeable nature of the context and situation, in which an expression can lend itself for interpretation as polite, non-polite or politic. In his discussion, he also stresses the role of inferential communication and relevance. Furthermore, the author introduces a distinction between formulaic and semi-formulaic utterances and he quotes the division between two types of meaning after Halliday

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<sup>13</sup> In discussing the theory of practice, Watts relies upon Werkhofer's (1992) theory about the functioning of society, wherein people, 'social animals', construct their world via interaction with others. Importantly, Werkhofer also perceives social practice as an ongoing, dynamic construct determined by previous encounters, experiences of similar character and objectified by social structures, and this is, more or less, the source of the term he uses, viz. the theory of practice. Also, Watts uses Werkhofer's comparison of politeness and money as means of successful communication and existence in any society. This comparison includes five tenets: firstly, both politeness and money are socially acquired means; secondly, both are symbolic, as they are derived from associations with something else, sometimes abstract, like values. Thirdly, both are historically constituted, and have changeable functions; fourthly, they both serve as sources of power or motivation to take specific courses of action. Fifthly, there are small chances of mastering either of those means. Having provided this background, he then presents politic behaviour as a way of 'paying' with linguistic resources what is expectable in some verbal-communicative social interaction. When the effect is supposed to be polite, then more is paid than is being required (Werkhofer 1992: 190).

(1978): ideational meaning and interpersonal meaning.<sup>14</sup> The first type, which he re-labels as *propositional* meaning (Watts 2003: 173-176), is connected with language structure, truth conditions and values, whilst the second type, re-named *procedural* meaning, indicates sets of procedures via which the propositional meaning can be realised. It is also the type of meaning foregrounded in politeness expressions, so that the whole utterance can be seen as a ‘politeness payment.’ Next, in presenting the distinction between grammaticalisation and pragmaticalisation (after Hopper and Traugott 1993: 1-2), he argues that both these processes stem from socio-communicative verbal interaction and involve pragmatic inferencing. In every language there exists a set of expressions that have pragmaticalised (to a various extent) in order to signal the procedural meaning, hence their name, expressions of procedural meaning, or EPMs (Watts 2003: 180-182). Watts argues that the lexical meaning of EPMs does not reveal any additional, polite meaning, since it is the prosody and intonation that inform the hearer about the possibility of a polite interpretation. The features of EPMs are multiple: they trigger inferences in the addressee that bear on the interpersonal meaning and also instruct the hearer to derive inferences from the propositional values. They form part of politic behaviour, and, if absent, provoke an impoliteness effect and assessment, but do not necessarily have to encode politeness. EPMs serve as formulaic, ritualised utterances that have been drawn from utterance types after the process of pragmaticalisation (Watts 2003: 182). Formulaic, ritualised EPMs form a rather restricted class outside the propositional content of the utterance, even though some of them do have a sentential structure (Watts 2003: 186-189), e.g. *Excuse me, could I just squeeze past you?* or *I do beg your pardon. I didn’t quite hear what you said* (Watts 2003: 187).

In contrast, the author also distinguishes semi-formulaic EPMs (2003: 189-200). Like indirect speech acts, they are means of ‘paying’ for the FTA by producing expressions open to a ‘polite’ interpretation. Again, the hearer has to be guided by prosody, since there is a possibility of an utterance being interpreted literally, as in: *Would you be so kind as to move over a little* (Watts 2003: 190) or *Would you mind not saying that again?* (Watts 2003: 197). For semi-formulaic EPMs, there also exists a possibility of a non-polite interpretation, depending on the context.

EPMs are also compared to terms that appear in taxonomies of polite expressions by other scholars, including: hedges and boosters (Holmes 1995), upgraders, downgraders,

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<sup>14</sup> These findings serve as a basis for the term ‘relational work’ (cf. Watts 1989, Locher 2004, Locher and Watts 2008).

committees, downtoners, consultative devices, politeness markers (House and Kasper 1981), intensifiers (Quirk et al., 1985) and others. It is Watts's belief that EPMs, despite forming such a heterogeneous class, can effectively supersede all these taxonomies. They are proven to have common functions and characteristics that point at their usefulness within Relevance Theory: attached to other utterance elements, they help to overlook a couple of inferential steps and arrive quickly at the maximally relevant propositional assumption in a given context (Watts 2003: 191).

The last issue concerning (im)politeness is the view on power within Relevance Theory, closely linked to the theory of practice (2003: 201-216). Power is tightly connected with 'relational work,' or work invested in the negotiation of relationships in communication (Watts 1989, 2003).<sup>15</sup> He considers relational work to be an important part of the social practice, since it involves the latent struggle for power between the participants, where the perception of politeness is vital (Watts 2003: 201) so the judgement over what is (im)polite hinges upon the ever-changing power relations, which stem from the dynamicity of context. In discussing power Watts quotes the distinction by Ng and Bradac (1993) into 'power over' and 'power to' (2003: 213-216, also in Watts 1989).

#### **4. Impoliteness within Relevance Theory**

##### **4.1. Meakins (2001)**

Meakins (2001) elaborates on a different, empirically-based impoliteness model within Relevance Theory, which combines ostensive communication with the importance of forms, strategies and tactics, traditionally disregarded by Relevance Theorists. She disagrees with the existent impoliteness frameworks to date, which, she argues, advocate a normative-based approach to communication and treat impoliteness like a deviation from the 'proper' communication. In her view, impoliteness should not be underestimated: it percolates into language usage and signals disagreement and disrespect, which are not uncommon in interaction. Impoliteness abounds in communicative strategies, each of which exists in its own right, and should not be read as simply 'lack of politeness.' Moreover, she observes a problem with assigning absolute politeness or impoliteness to an utterance and maintains, arguing that there is no inherent (im)politeness "[t]here is too much evidence to the contrary to attempt to suggest that there are universal politeness forms" (2001: 63). The author also

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. a more detailed description of relational work in Locher (2004) and Locher and Watts (2008).

stresses the importance and frequency of indirect impoliteness (expressed via an implicature), questioning the indirectness-politeness link, like Escandell-Vidal (1996).

She calls for a theory that would locate impoliteness inside a theory of communication as bearing impact on face information within their mutual cognitive environment. The impolite effect will be triggered by ostensive linguistic features that have a negative influence on individual, relational and social face features of the hearer's face, and a positive one on the speaker's face. Building on Watts's politeness behaviour (1989), she observes that both politeness and impoliteness are its marked forms. Face information, in her view, changes all the time, and the dynamics of face itself contributes to the dynamicity of her model.

Taking a critical stance on Grice's CP, she concludes that it conveys a mixed attitude towards rudeness, and accuses its fragment "by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice 1975: 26) of sounding obscure and inconclusive when it comes to social factors (Meakins 2001: 18). Genuine impoliteness is bound to violate the CP (being against the normative state of conversation) but then banter, or superficial impoliteness, would be cooperative. Meakins (2001: 18) proposes a different approach to the CP: not as a theory of communication, but an interactional context, which would also foreground non-cooperation. The cooperative content should not be prerequisite for communication, therefore rudeness can also be conveniently accommodated in this understanding of the CP. If, she states, communication is to be treated like a jointly produced venture, featuring some preferred reactions, then the content of our utterances should be uncontroversial and agreeing, which does not turn out to be the case (Meakins 2001: 18-21).

Meakins (2001: 67) considers Relevance Theory to be an adequate tool in impoliteness analysis, since it does not presume any cooperation or politeness as verbal norms, given its asocial nature. She stresses the importance of the mutual cognitive environment, which she describes as initially constructed from immediately preceding utterances and expanded (either via encyclopaedic knowledge or the present environment), dynamic and changeable in character. Another merit of RT is its emphasis on the changing context, which allows us to analyse the constant struggle between the faces of the speaker and the hearer. As with metaphor or irony understanding, she posits no special mechanisms for decoding politeness

or impoliteness apart from searching for relevance (Meakins 2001: 64-65), thus agreeing with Escandell-Vidal (1998a). Impoliteness is connected to the context rather than to any capacities of the language user (Meakins 2001: 63).

Meakins acknowledges politic behaviour as understood by Watts (1989, 1992, 2003), defined as behaviour oriented at maintaining the *status quo* of a relationship between the speaker and the hearer, according to the social expectations and assumptions, and governed by e.g. power and solidarity. Also, along with Watts and Jary, she agrees that the polite/impolite effect takes place, and is understood as such, when the deviation from the expected, i.e. politic (not 'polite'), form is both relevant and noticeable, i.e. marked, providing a given contextual effect. Thus she contrasts politic behaviour and ostensive communication. Politic behaviour is labelled by her as non-ostensive and, obviously, unmarked, without any contextual effects (Meakins 2001: 48).

As she elaborates on the notion of ostension (after Sperber and Wilson 1986: 153-154), she notes that elements below the sentence level also carry the presumption of optimal relevance, since they provide a change in the mutual cognitive environment of the speaker and the hearer, and, by the same token, guarantee contextual (later called cognitive) effects. These elements (be it prosody, particular words, grammatical structures, markers, inflection etc.) she labels 'ostension contributors,' or "marked linguistic forms which, when combined, may be used to infer the overall relevance of im/politeness to the interpretation of an utterance" (Meakins 2001: 47-48). In light of these findings, impoliteness is not a 'deviation' from politeness, but rather a communicated form of marked linguistic behaviour on the opposite point of the scale to politeness (Meakins 2001: 47-48).

In her considerations of face, she notes that the positive/negative dichotomy is not really practicable, which is in line with Bousfield's (2008) or Spencer-Oatey's (2002) observations, and suggests that the concept itself should be rebuilt so as to suit the purposes of impoliteness, that is, challenging the face created by the hearer and, simultaneously, reinforcing that of the speaker. The result then will be a change in the perception of both interactants' faces in their mutual cognitive environment.

Meakins, like many other scholars (e.g. Matsumoto 1988, Matsumoto 1989, Gu 1990, Ide 1989, Mao 1994), points out the Anglocentrism and Western bias of Brown and Levinson's model and criticises its sweeping assumptions, which ignore cultural subtleties

and differences. She supports instead a three-part face model proposed in Lim and Bowers (1991): face being made of Fellowship Face (i.e. the need to be included, e.g. in a group or community), Competence Face (the want that our abilities be respected by others) and Autonomy Face (the want not to be impeded). In other words, this model predicts that our linguistic behaviour is made of social, relational and individual features. The author then uses this division to introduce her own face model, made of individual face, relationship face and social face. Individual face (Meakins 2001: 88) corresponds to positive face in Brown and Levinson (1987), and concerns personal attributes (positive and negative), opinions, as well as the need that others recognise and accept them. However, contrary to positive face, individual face is not really connected with social acceptance; instead, it does not exclude the possibility of being feared or loathed by its members. Relationship face (Meakins 2001: 97) refers to more abstract variables in interaction, like relative power and interpersonal distance, and thus can be compared with negative face. It is more dynamic, changeable and contextually sensitive than individual face, and alters whenever a new element enters an existing relationship. Lastly, social face (Meakins 2001: 119) comes down to an amalgam of sociolinguistic factors like gender, ethnicity, age group, social class etc., and the resultant linguistic traits like one's intonation, accent, dialect or sociolect; in this respect, it overlaps with individual face. Other characteristics of social face are religious, political, interest or pastime and employment affiliations; in short, everything that helps to individualise a language user and determine their identity. Also, this face aspect takes into consideration the need to be included and accepted inside a group, associated with Brown and Levinson's positive face.

Meakins inspects the expression of impoliteness via various implicatures, noticing the role of intentionality: "Sperber and Wilson (1995) suggest that intentionality and the recognition of intentionality are vital in the relevance and ostensive communication of utterances. Thus it follows that intentionality is a prerequisite for implicature retrieval, and therefore im/politeness" (Meakins 2001: 64).

Basing on her data, Meakins distinguishes three vast superstrategies: Individual Impoliteness, Relationship Impoliteness and Social Impoliteness, all of them developed on the basis of her idea of face and its aspects. Individual Impoliteness (Meakins 2001: 89-97) addresses the individual face, and presumes a cognitive effect in the mutual cognitive environment that attacks the individual face of the hearer and enhances that of the speaker.



The tactics subsumed under this term are: seeking disagreement, face aggravation of any kind, insulting, belittling, ridiculing, challenging, contradicting other, irony, exaggeration, and all specific instances of behaviour labelled face threatening acts against positive face in Brown and Levinson (1987) or as positive impoliteness in Culpeper (1996: 358). Also, Individual Impoliteness accommodates rhetorical and intonation questions.

The next superstrategy, Relationship Impoliteness (Meakins 2001: 99-118), relies on the cognitive effect that causes a change in both interactants' faces, via not acknowledging their face wants that regulate the condition of their relationship. Instances of this superstrategy are: forcing opinions, forcefully controlling the conversation, ignoring other in interaction, any speech act meant to increase the power of one interactant over another or the distance, as well as a selection of Culpeper's (1996: 358) positive impoliteness strategies: comparing self with other, disassociating other, asking polar, speculative and negative questions, raising taboo topics, forcing opinions, abrupt closures, interruptions or illegally shifting the topic of conversation, comments to self or to third parties.

The last superstrategy, Social Impoliteness (Meakins 2001: 120-126), builds on the cognitive effect of challenging any face construct to do with a specific group the hearer belongs to, and enhancing the speaker's own social face values. Strategies and tactics here partly overlap with those in Individual Impoliteness, as the two face aspects are interwoven. Apart from these strategies, Social Impoliteness also comprises: aligning other with a negative group, demeaning the group they belong to, using endearment terms, demeaning prominent members of other's group, questioning other's ingroupedness.

#### **4.2. Locher and Watts (2008)**

In their paper from 2008, Locher and Watts discuss impoliteness from a cognitive and discursive perspective, basing on the notion of relational work. This term, which first appears in Watts (1989) and is later elaborated upon in Locher and Watts (2004, 2005, 2008), is defined as "the work people invest in negotiating their relationships in interaction" (Locher 2004, Locher and Watts 2005, Locher and Watts 2008). It has successfully replaced the notion of facework, present, among others, in Watts (2003). Basing on previous studies on relational work (e.g. Watzlawick et al. 1967; Halliday 1978, Locher 2004: 45-58), the authors recall that it is always present in communicative acts and that each utterance is made

of two elements: informational content and a relationship aspect, understood as 'interpersonal content' (Locher and Watts 2008: 78).

The authors do not regard impoliteness as inherent; in other words, "whether interactants perceive or intend a message to be polite, impolite or merely appropriate (among many other labels) depends on judgements that they make at the level of relational work *in situ*" (Locher and Watts 2008: 78). These judgements are based on norms and expectations acquired by way of categorising similar past experiences and conclusions derived from these experiences, which are labelled 'frames of expectations' (Tannen 1993, Escandell-Vidal 1996). For Locher and Watts (2008: 78-81), frames are "norms and expectations (...) acquired over time and (...) constantly subject to change and variation" and they stem from "cognitive conceptualisations of forms of (in)appropriate behaviour, constructed by individuals via their own histories of social practice" (ibid.). Frames are further described as changeable, dynamic and open to renegotiation; hence, they closely correspond to the theory of practice and the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990) or politic behaviour (Watts 1989, 2003). Moreover, they are invaluable in analyzing interaction, as our assessment of what is (im)polite is always profiled against the actual frame of expectation for the given communicative situation (Locher and Watts 2008: 78).

Confronted with relational work, the hearer has four options of labelling it: impolite (inappropriate, or non-politic, and negatively marked), non-polite (appropriate, or politic, and unmarked), polite (appropriate, or politic, and positively marked) and finally over-polite (inappropriate, or non-politic, and negatively marked). The negative evaluation stems from an emotional, forceful reaction to a situation, which causes a conspicuous mismatch with our previously held expectations.

Locher and Watts add one more factor to the impoliteness<sub>1</sub>/impoliteness<sub>2</sub> distinction, namely intentionality, which is present in first-order impoliteness. Both interactants are capable of recognising intentions as well as perceiving them, so the uptake of the message is as important as the message itself. If the hearer wishes to offend the interlocutor, then linguistic resources must be sought that fit exactly this purpose, or as Locher (2004: 83) observes: "If [the speaker's] goal is to hurt the other's feelings, he or she can still choose to do so via language." Impoliteness then would be viewed as a breach of norms which gains a negative evaluation (according to the existent expectation frames), along with an emotional

reaction. The authors use an authentic news interview in which verbal aggression escalates from being impolite, but expectable within the genre and evoking no forceful reaction, to being impolite in a way which breaches the norms, where the norm-breaching is further substantiated by a strong, emotional reaction of one of the participants, the recipient or 'victim' of impolite accusations (Locher and Watts 84-95). According to Locher and Watts, this proves that an element of a conversation which transgresses the frames of expectations will be openly labelled rude, and the speaker will be accused of illicit conduct and violation of norms via a counter-insult. In judging impolite behaviour online, e.g. in Internet chatrooms or forums, the authors stress the importance of metapragmatic comments as a reliable source of such assessments, which provides an insight into how impoliteness<sub>1</sub> is perceived in a given society. Nevertheless, Locher and Watts are aware of limitations of this approach and admit that some more data based research is needed.

The authors concede that their model has common points with other frameworks such as that by Kienpointer (1997), who proposes that rudeness be named 'inappropriateness' when it comes to norms. Also, their viewpoint coincides with Mills's (2005) in her discussion of norms of appropriacy: after these have been transgressed within the hypothetical Community of Practice (Mills 2002, 2005), what arises is an impoliteness assessment and a recognition of intention to threaten the hearer's face and social identity.

They demonstrate that in pondering impoliteness we should not omit power, drawing on observations in Watts (2003) or Locher (2004). Power is, at all times, latently present, constantly renegotiated in discourse, exercised in social practice and linked to our perceptions of impolite behaviour.

#### **4.3. Culpeper (2008)**

Culpeper (2008), in his preface to "Impoliteness in Language," provides a summary and critical evaluation of various studies on impoliteness and rudeness that have appeared in the recent years. The author quotes various criticisms of Brown and Levinson's model of politeness. One of the most crucial critical voices is Eelen (2001), who coins the division into (im)politeness<sub>1</sub> and (im)politeness<sub>2</sub>. Eelen's accusation, voiced also by Watts (2003, 2005) refers to Brown and Levinson's tendency to focus on (im)politeness<sub>2</sub> instead of (im)politeness<sub>1</sub>.

The author also discusses the recent developments in the approach towards (im)politeness, including the movement away from Gricean and strategy-based view towards the discursive one, based on politic behaviour and relational work. He praises the latter approach, recalling Watts's (2005) continuum-based view on politeness, rudeness and impoliteness. Within this view, he also surveys the term 'over-politeness' as negatively marked behaviour: while agreeing that over-politeness can indeed stem from exceeding the given norms (a relational mismanagement) or be read as 'failed politeness' within the given frames of expectations, he argues that more data-based research is needed in this area. Moreover, he argues that the diversity of contexts may lead to different interpretations of given behaviour. For instance, in some situations, over-politeness could be a result of 'repeatedly used politeness,' in others, the outcome of using language that is 'too polite' for the occasion. Stressing the importance of dynamicity of communication, he disagrees with Locher and Watts (2005: 30) stating that it is hard to equate over-politeness with impoliteness, since the effects of both are too disparate, even though both are negative. However, he acknowledges that intentional over-politeness may be read as sarcasm (Culpeper 2008: 28).

In terms of typology, yet another distinction is drawn between impoliteness and rudeness. Impoliteness is defined as intentional and implying more face damage, whereas rudeness is unintentional. In fact, impoliteness<sub>i</sub> assumes that it is the perception of intention, and not the intention itself, that renders an act (im)polite. Here, Culpeper follows the definition of intention by Gibbs (1999: 17) as "dynamic, emergent properties of interactive social/historical/cultural moments within which people create and make sense of different human artefacts." He strengthens his view by using data from the British National Corpus and contrasting the incidence of the lexemes 'rude' and 'impolite' therein. Interestingly, Terkourafi (2008) posits a distinction which applies the same labels, but in a reverse fashion.

Finally, his observations on power and impoliteness draw upon findings in Locher (2004), including her 'checklist on power' (Locher 2004: 39-40) and her conclusion that power is bound to severely restrict the hearer's action-environment. He agrees with Locher in that power goes hand in hand with the execution of impoliteness, which is sparked off by power imbalance. It is stressed that the power imbalance in question is only successful if the

action-environment restriction takes place repeatedly and involves both the speaker and the hearer.

#### 4.4. Terkourafi (2008)

Terkourafi's distinction between politeness, rudeness and impoliteness is the reverse to that proposed by Culpeper (2008): namely, she claims rudeness to be intentional and impoliteness unintentional and accidental, quoting various lexicographic and diachronic references and corpora.<sup>16</sup> Similarly to Watts and Locher, she observes difficulties with formulating automatic judgements about what is (im)polite. Her framework, which comprises these three phenomena, is based on findings in (various authors) about two basic biological mechanisms in human behaviour: approach and withdrawal (Terkourafi 2008: 50-52, after Davidson, 1992). These two constituents are prerequisite for a correct understanding of face-threatening and face-constituting behaviour. She bases views on face and facework on those in Scollon and Scollon (1995) and shares their observation that there is "*no faceless communication*" (Scollon and Scollon 1995: 38), and in that interaction can never be divorced from face consideration. In fact, she claims that every instance of interaction ends up with the faces of the participants being constituted or threatened (Terkourafi 2008: 47). She inspects intentionality as described in Grice (1989) in order to justify its immense role in the interpretation of an utterance as (im)polite, as argued in Brown and Levinson (1987). However, she disclaims the one-to-one correspondence between polite/rude/impolite intentions and the hearer's judgement. As she stipulates, none of the three notions (politeness, impoliteness, rudeness) can be part of 'what is said,' and instead should be treated as perlocutionary effects (Terkourafi 2008: 55-63). Her explanation is as follows: if face-constituting or threatening really equalled recognising intention, then the most economical strategy would be simply stating this intention overtly, which obviously is not the case in everyday interaction. Understood as perlocutionary effects, both face-threatening and face-constituting are wholly dependent on the hearer themselves, and occur whether or not an intention has been recognised (Terkourafi 2008: 58-60, after Fraser and Nolen 1981: 96). It is thus in the hearer's disposition to judge whether the speaker is approaching them, or withdrawing from them, in an appropriate and expected way or otherwise.

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<sup>16</sup> Waters (2012) offers a lexical semantic analysis of the term 'rude.'

Like Locher and Watts (2008), she distinguishes between markedness and unmarkedness of linguistic behaviour. She also proposes a typology of polite, impolite and rude behaviour, but from the perspective of the hearer recognizing the speaker's intention on the part of the hearer. In marked behaviour, the given perlocutionary effect is preceded by the hearer's detecting the speaker's intention. In unmarked behaviour, however, this tendency is not inferred but rather presumed and anticipated (Terkourafi 2008: 64-65). In other words, unmarked behaviour, both polite and rude, 'short-circuits' recognizing the intention and assumes a conventional link between a situation and an expression, which produces a given perlocutionary effect (Terkourafi 2008: 65-66). These connections, as well as the interactants' knowledge about them, stem from the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990: 53). In light of these findings, intention itself is not of great relevance, and face-constituting (in unmarked politeness) or face-threatening (in unmarked rudeness) are by-products of a given exchange. Her justification of unmarked rudeness is that certain situations and contexts, e.g. courtroom discourse, interrogations or the army, demand face-threat as part of the expected behaviour (*habitus*), therefore face-damaging effect is attainable without even considering the speaker's intention. Other contexts in which rudeness and face threat are encoded and expectable are: banter, ritualistic insults etc. (Terkourafi 2008: 67-69). Here, her line of thinking is similar to Culpeper's (2003, 2005). In general, by executing face-threat and constituting his/her own face, the speaker shows that he/she is conversant with the operative norms and proves competent as members of a community (Terkourafi 2008: 69-70).

In contrast, in marked politeness, the linguistic reaction to a given situation is unexpected, and involves a non-conventionalised expression. It involves first a recognition of the speaker's intention and then a face-constituting perlocutionary effect (Terkourafi 2008: 70). Similarly to Culpeper (2008), Terkourafi signals the possibility of an over-politeness effect, which might be read as marked politeness, but also as impoliteness or marked rudeness depending on the context. In marked rudeness, face-threat is unexpected and it defies conventions obtaining in a given community. The overall situation between the participants is more fragile than in unmarked rudeness; otherwise, the speaker also uses face-threat to enhance his/her face, only this can turn out a risky and dangerous venture. Lastly, impoliteness involves the use of an expression not conventionally expected in a given situation, which leads to face-threat, yet there is no face-threatening intention on part of the speaker to begin with (Terkourafi 2008: 70).

#### **4.5. (Im)politeness as weak implicatures (Wilson 2006)**

In her study of understanding metaphors and figurative language, Wilson (2006) observes that interpreting metaphors is a process that does not require any special cognitive capacities, let alone literature interpreting skills on the part of the hearer. The comprehension of any metaphor is simply achieved via the Relevance-Theoretic Comprehension Procedure (Heuristics) and the creation of suitable ad-hoc concepts (Barsalou 1982) out of the concepts already stored in our mind as part of encyclopaedic knowledge. As with metaphor, irony or humour, the poetic effect is explained simply as a weaker implicature derived from the utterance. Notably, among papers by Sperber and Wilson on the application of Relevance Theory in analysing various aspects of communication, linguistic impoliteness is nowhere to be found. An exception here is Wilson (1999), where the author states that RT need not focus on social studies as that would prove uneconomical and unnecessary. It might seem that, according to Wilson, the understanding of im/politeness boils down to the very same process of arriving at weaker implicatures, as opposed to strong implicatures. Consequently, a question arises: do these findings mean that both politeness and impoliteness might disappear as a natural class and ‘dissolve’ among the multitude of stronger and weaker implicatures? It might be inferred that this particular problem has simply not been taken under consideration in the existing literature, and maybe this absence is telling. However, impoliteness understood as *impoliteness<sub>1</sub>* (the folk, commonsensical reading of the term) is by all means detected (or sensed) and labelled as such by everyday language users, so undeniably it does deserve the term ‘a natural class of linguistic behaviour.’

#### **5. Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have outlined and summarised the most important theories on politeness and impoliteness in the literature on pragmatics to date, dividing them into two broader categories: the Grice-based (Gricean) approach and non-Gricean approach, including more cognitive and Relevance-Theory based frameworks. I devoted one separate section to major RT-based politeness models and one section to impoliteness models within this very framework to show that impoliteness as a phenomenon has already gained recognition in the most important fields in pragmatics and it is no longer viewed as just a by-product, or side-effect, of politeness.

The Grice-based models rely not only on the Cooperative Principle and the maxims, but also owe a lot to Brown and Levinson's (1987) understanding of politeness, which relies on specific strategies. Some of those models suggest improvements to the very concept of face (Bravo 2008, Bousfield 2008). The cognitive and RT-based readings of (im)politeness are based on different assumptions, but that does not imply that their authors reject Grice's or Brown and Levinson's theory completely and are in opposition to those theories. Some of RT-based models, like that in Jary (1998) or Meakins (2001), in fact successfully combine the Principle of Relevance with strategies. Finally, another very interesting approach towards impoliteness, based on relational work (Watts 1989, Locher 2004, among others) and markedness, is proposed by Locher and Watts (2008).

All the approaches to impoliteness summarised in this chapter have undoubtedly contributed to a broadening of the perspective on that subject and provided invaluable insight into our understanding of its mechanics in interaction. However, if I were to critically assess all the above theories and choose those that are in line with my understanding of impoliteness and the outcome of the data analysis in this dissertation, I would state that the ideas suggested by Culpeper (1996, 2003, 2005) and Bousfield (2008), from the first group (i.e. Grice-based models), and Meakins (2001) from the second group (i.e. Relevance Theory and cognitive oriented models) probably best correspond to what the data represents, which is further discussed in Chapter IV. This observation should not suggest that other theories and models are in any way deficient or erroneous. Those three authors seem to attach a lot of importance to the richness of strategies chosen by speakers in confrontational education, as well as to intentionality and face. Moreover, within this very group of authors, it seems that the understanding of face as presented by Bousfield (2008) and Meakins (2001) appears to be less rigid and clear-cut, and therefore more practical, than e.g. that by Culpeper (1996), which is an elaboration on Brown and Levinson's (1987) findings regarding face.



## **CHAPTER II**

### **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS: INTRODUCTION**

#### **1. Introduction**

In this chapter, I intend to achieve a few objectives. First, I provide a description of the data, its origin and specific character, in section 2. Later, I dedicate two sections to crucial problems connected with the data: section 3 is devoted to discourse and discourse analysis, and section 4 concerns indirectness. The reason why I discuss those two phenomena at this point of my dissertation and not earlier on, in Chapter I (which contains theoretical considerations) is that I find them indispensable for a full interpretation and understanding of the data, as well as inextricably linked to its nature. What is more, the character of sections 3 and 4 is, by and large, ‘confrontational.’ In section 3, after answering the question about how my data constitutes a piece of discourse, I also outline various perspectives on discourse and on discourse analysis, and then compare, or confront, them with my data. Similarly, in section 4 I present different views on indirectness and also juxtapose them with my data. Both sections end with a conclusion regarding which view on discourse analysis and indirectness respectively seems to work best with my data, or more precisely, where my data would fit in the studies of both of these topics. Therefore I consider it necessary to include these sections here.

#### **2. Introducing the data**

The data used in this dissertation comes from one of the best-known Polish online shops and auctioning services, Allegro.pl (the actual address is: [www.allegro.pl](http://www.allegro.pl)). It sells a wide variety of goods, ranging from books, clothes or furniture to domestic pets, cars or renting flats and houses. The company is based in Poznań, it has existed in Poland since 1999<sup>17</sup> and, to my knowledge, it is one of the most recognizable, successful and popular Polish online shops.

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. [http://allegro.pl/country\\_pages/1/0/marketing/about.php](http://allegro.pl/country_pages/1/0/marketing/about.php)

As in many other online services of this kind, every user of Allegro.pl can be both a buyer and a seller, has his/her own profile and a login and password to access it. The profile can be viewed by any other user of the shop only after logging in. It includes terms and conditions of cooperation with the users (payments, shipment, returns / refunds policy), which should be studied carefully before starting a transaction with any of them. An online transaction obviously involves two parties: a buyer and a seller, and it is considered closed once the money transfer has been made, the goods are shipped to the buyer or collected personally by him/her. After every transaction, regardless of whether it was successful or not, both parties are supposed to issue a comment on how well it proceeded, evaluate on the quality of the service and the goods and other aspects (e.g. the other party's reliability, personality, attitude, punctuality etc.) and this comment is then published on the user's website. Comments can be positive (which helps the user gain a point, as every transaction involves 1 gaining point), negative (which gives the user a minus point)<sup>18</sup> or neutral (no points added or subtracted). It is possible to reply to a comment (independently of posting our own comment: positive, negative or neutral) after clicking on a special 'Reply' option. This solution is used especially when a transaction is not successful for any reason and / or the feedback received is negative. The reasons for wrongful transactions usually include: delayed payments (or the lack thereof), delayed delivery (or no delivery at all), dissatisfaction with the product, the buyer or the seller not showing up at the appointed time, communication breakdowns and misunderstandings or accidents. Also, the product might turn out to be faulty, broken, inappropriately packaged or it could have some parts missing. There are other, less typical reasons; however, to my knowledge, the ones mentioned above apparently are the most common bones of contention between the buyers and the sellers.

This brings us to the starting point for my analysis, i.e. a combination of negative feedback issued by a buyer, which is followed by a response produced by a seller. This forms the basic unit, which I will call a *conflictive exchange* or an *altercation*. There were three basic criteria that influenced my choice of conflictive exchanges for my compilation. First, the feedback by the buyer had to be negative and transaction described in the comment had to be unsatisfactory for any of the reasons given above (or others, related). Second, both comments (by the buyer and the seller) had to be face-threatening in some way. In other

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<sup>18</sup> It is also possible to annul a negative comment provided that both parties agree on that. In this case, the comment is crossed out, but its content is still visible, so it could still potentially threaten the user's reputation to some extent. A typical annulled comment looks like this: ~~ALE BUTY DWA RAZY NA NOGACH I ROZWALILEY SIE MASAKRA~~  
(from [http://allegro.pl/show\\_user.php?uid=23723665&type=fb\\_all&feedback\\_type=fb\\_recvd\\_neg](http://allegro.pl/show_user.php?uid=23723665&type=fb_all&feedback_type=fb_recvd_neg))

words, the FTAs were supposed to be highly confrontational (Chen 2001: 96, Wiechecka 2010, Wiechecka 2012) and both comments had to carry a heavy load of verbal impoliteness. Third, the sellers involved in the exchanges had to have very good reputations and high scores (over 90% of positive feedback)<sup>19</sup>. Such users treat their Allegro.pl activity really seriously, as selling online is very often how they do business and also make a living. Given that, it is their priority to gain as much positive feedback as possible and as little neutral or negative feedback as possible (or none at all). The objects of transactions were various and I did not apply any specific criteria in choosing them; some objects were more typical, some were more 'controversial.' They include: books, toys, jewellery, accessories for pets, electronic equipment etc. As it turns out, such exchanges can be triggered by a transaction involving even the least 'controversial' goods like books or toys. Here is a typical example of such a conflictive exchange:

*Buyer: Brakowało kilku stron, obowiązkiem sprzedawcy jest to sprawdzić. Zakładam, że to przeoczenie, ale komentarz jest taki jest.*

*Seller: Wiesz co to jest 'reklamacja'? Tzn. że zgłaszasz problem i dostajesz zwrot kasy. Miło że się nie skontaktowałeś przed wystawieniem komentarza. Thanx.*

*[Buyer: A few pages were missing, it's the seller's duty to check it. I assume it was just an oversight, but the comment is the way it is.*

*Seller: Do you know what 'a complaint' is? It means that you inform me about your problem and you get your dough back. Nice of you not to have contacted me before posting your comment. Thanx.]*

This example (which is discussed in detail later in my analysis) illustrates this phenomenon really well: we have a description of a faulty item, probably a book, posted by a buyer (i.e. an act of impoliteness towards the seller) that is coupled with a repartee by the seller in which they are defending their position, but also attacking the buyer (i.e. an act of impoliteness towards the buyer).

The data (see appendix) consists of 596 such conflictive exchanges, or altercations, between buyers and sellers. They were all found in the feedback section of the participants' user profiles. I have identified 34 sellers and 538 buyers altogether. The time factor was not considered in choosing the examples, so they do not come from a specific period of time (e.g. the year 2007 or 2010). Similarly, the type of goods which were the object of the exchanges was not relevant for my analysis: they include books, electronic equipment, cosmetics, pet accessories,

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<sup>19</sup> Until 2011, the best performing sellers had the status of SuperSellers, which used to be quite an important distinction in the Allegro.pl community: it meant that such sellers are reliable and their reputation is really high. This title has been replaced with "Standard Allegro" status, which has even more restrictive demands.

I have decided to focus on Polish data, since this is the language in which I am more comfortable than in English when it comes to judging FTAs, impoliteness or the speaker's intention. I also feel that I have a better understanding of, and a stronger intuition about, offending the other's face and the means used in accomplishing this purpose in Polish.

What is more, I have left the spelling, punctuation and grammar of the comments presented unchanged because it is my objective to preserve the authenticity of the conflict and show the emotional involvement of the opponents. It may be the case that they are not too familiar with Polish grammar and spelling requirements, but that is impossible to prove. There is also a strong reason for me to believe that their mistakes might reflect extreme distress, annoyance or frustration, which made them neglect spelling and grammar conventions for a moment. This authenticity might suggest that the situation was so serious that they have produced genuine intentional impoliteness with a genuine aim to hurt the other's face.

Before discussing the particular examples, I wish to focus on two other aspects of pragmatic analysis which help to provide a full picture of indirect impoliteness, i.e. discourse analysis and indirectness, and each of those phenomena is given a separate section.

### **3. The data as type of discourse**

This section aims at examining how my data, along with its characteristics and specificity, fits into discourse analysis and different understandings of this term. In doing this, I wish to concentrate on major definitions and understandings of discourse analysis. Then I consider the importance of speech act theory within discourse analysis. I also intend to confront these findings with what can be observed in my data. My last objective is to state, more or less precisely, where my data belongs within discourse analysis. I do not wish to focus on critical discourse analysis, since I do not believe it is applicable to my data, which I consider free from ideology.

#### **3.1. Discourse analysis**

In literature there have been innumerable attempts at defining discourse and countless debates on the issue. Here, I do not wish to present all of those definitions or evaluate them, as this would go well beyond the scope of this study.

Brown and Yule (1983: ix) propose a primarily linguistic reading of the term 'discourse.' Their view is also speaker (or writer) centred: those who communicate and interpret are people themselves, so the focus should be placed on them (ibid.)

"how humans use language to communicate and, in particular, how addressees construct linguistic messages for addressees and how addressees work on linguistic messages in order to interpret them (...) our primary interest is the traditional concern of the descriptive linguist, to give an account of how forms of language are used in communication" (ibid.).

Among later accounts of discourse analysis, I support Mills's (1997 [2001]: 137-138) opinion that:

"rather than examples which have been invented by the linguist or which have been found in textbooks, discourse analysts are interested in 'real' naturally occurring language, usually either tape-recorded speech (for example, the interaction between a teacher and a class of students, or a dialogue between a doctor and patient), or texts such as instruction manuals, books for children, newspaper editorials, and so on, which have a communicative function and are not therefore invented for the purpose of analysis."

Mills claims that discourse analysis should be credited for producing tools useful in descriptions of how language functions within utterances and how it is structured; moreover, "it has forced many mainstream and traditional linguists to shift their attention from words in isolation to words within context" (Mills 1997 [2001]: 142).

Szehidewicz (2015: 19) formulates a very apt and useful interpretation of discourse (after Mills 1997), which is close to my understanding of the term and which I endorse; she maintains that discourse should be studied within as broad a perspective as possible and "what counts as discourse are all the utterances and texts which have meaning, affect interlocutors in some way, possess internal coherence, have some kind of context, are useful in some way and may be analyzed with the use of different linguistic methods."

### **3.2. Approaches to discourse**

Schiffrin (1994: 6-12) provides a very useful summary of the key approaches to discourse: she lists speech acts, interactional sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication, the pragmatic approach, conversation analysis and the variationist approach.

The first, traditional account of speech acts provided by Austin (1962) draws attention to the problem of 'doing things with words' and predicts the existence of performatives, e.g. verbs that perform an action by themselves at the moment of being uttered. He also

introduces three new terms: locution (the words actually used), illocution (the force of the speaker's intention behind the words) and perlocution (what effect the illocution has on the hearer) (Thomas 1995: 49-50). Searle (1969, 1975) takes Austin's taxonomy one step further by proposing illocutionary force indicating devices, or linguistic means in which the illocutionary force resides. The basic assumptions of the speech act theory did not originally refer to examining discourse. Nevertheless, several issues therein (indirect speech acts, multifunctionality or the importance of context), are, as was discovered later, easily applicable within discourse analysis.

In interactional sociolinguistics, the view on discourse is cross-disciplinary, deriving from sociology, anthropology and linguistics. Some followers of this approach (e.g. Gumperz 1982) try to solve the problem why people from diverse cultures, who have the same grammatical knowledge of a language, contextualize utterances in a different fashion, which leads to producing totally different messages. Others, like Goffman (Goffman 1963, 1971, 1974) concentrate on "how language is situated in particular circumstances of social life, and on how it adds (or reflects different types of meaning (e.g. expressive, instrumental) and structure (e.g. interactional, institutional) to those circumstances" (Schiffrin 1994: 7).

The ethnography of communication is also based on anthropology and, like anthropology, it adopts a holistic approach towards behaviour and meaning. It originally resulted from Hymes's (1972) disagreement with Chomsky's understanding of competence as referring only to abstract linguistic rules; Hymes suggests there should also be communicative competence, or a combination of knowledge of psychology, culture and language in use. In other words, this competence allows us to take part in everyday interactions or other speech events. Hymes also points out that communication as such is not universal to all cultures, as "[c]ultural conceptions of communication are deeply intertwined with conceptions of a person, cultural values, and world knowledge (...) instances of communication behaviour are never free of the cultural belief and action systems in which they occur" (Schiffrin 1994: 8). Other problems considered by scholars from this group are: the way cultural knowledge is reflected in grammar and action systems, communication via other verbal means (or silence). Studying discourse from this perspective requires two important things: first, being conversant with the speakers and their culture and second, examining every single communicative act in great detail: the person speaking, the setting and so on. This act then has to be situated within all universally available possibilities, but it should also serve to make generalizations about similar acts (Schiffrin 1994: 9).

The pragmatic approach is attributed to Grice (1975) and it focuses on how meaning can be analyzed at different levels: the utterance level and the speaker's meaning level, which has to be inferred with the aid of the Cooperative Principle and the conversational maxims, as well as the assumption that interactants are rational. As Schiffrin (1994: 9) observes, this approach is also supported by discourse analysis, which is inevitable in arriving at the intended meaning because utterances are contextualized.

The conversation analysis approach derives from the findings in Garfinkel (1967, 1974), and his notion of ethnomethodology. Garfinkel's ideas were used by Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974), among others, to inspect conversation. Their main aim is to examine how social order is recreated or manifests itself in conversation, so they focus on sequential structures, in order to "seek generalizations about context – and about social conduct and social life – *within* the progression of utterances themselves" (Schiffrin 1994: 10).

The last, variationist approach, which stems from Labov's (1972b) studies, assumes that there are patterns in linguistic variation, conditioned both socially and linguistically, which can be arrived at after "a systematic investigation of a speech community" (Schiffrin 1994: 11). This approach allows to analyse texts by segmenting them, giving labels to sections and as parts of larger structures and ascribing functions to them. Importantly, the variationist approach is more context-independent than interactional sociolinguistics, the ethnography of communication or conversation analysis (ibid.)

It seems a reasonable solution to analyse my data within a combination of two approaches towards discourse analysis: the speech acts (primarily) and the pragmatic approach, as those two views best fit their specific nature. Conversation analysis would be workable as well, but only in one aspect, i.e. adjacency pairs (Schegloff and Sacks 1973). In fact, the 'basic unit' of my analysis, made of a negative comment by a buyer paired with a reply by a seller, can be regarded as an adjacency pair in this particular context (comments after auctions on an online shop website). This order is always retained and what is more, in an internet shop context, expectable: after a negative evaluation there should be a rebuttal to that evaluation, unless the seller opts out of such a possibility, as they may always leave negative feedback unanswered. Therefore, we can definitely observe a certain regularity and convention here.

### **3.3. Speech acts in discourse analysis**

Brown and Yule (1983: 231-233) consider Speech Act Theory a valuable tool for a discourse analyst. They note, after Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) and Coulthard (1977), that speakers come to link two utterances that do not seem to be connected at face value in order to construct a coherent piece of discourse. It happens because "there is an assumed coherent structure to discourse over and above the more frequently described structure of sentential form" (Brown and Yule 1983: 231). Nevertheless, the authors point out a few flaws in the speech act framework. First, they explain that a speech act need not be just one 'typical utterance,' but it often constitutes one complex, longer syntactic chunk or a string of sentences, so that "a fairly extended utterance may be interpreted as a warning or as an apology" (Brown and Yule 1983: 233). This is observable in my data as well: impolite accusations, warnings, criticisms, denials etc. are sometimes quite complex and consist of longer sequences of sentences. In many cases the speech acts are made of stages: first, there is a longish preparation (e.g. a narrative) for the speech act and then there is the speech act proper, as in the following examples from the data (the speech acts proper have been underlined):

*Miesiac pertraktacji nie wywarł skutku. Osoba sprzedająca powinna znaleźć się pod „lupa”, władz Allegro, a niewykłuczone ze i prokuratury-patrz, produkowanie kopii monet. Myśle, że oszukanych są setki, lecz ze względu na małe straty-odpuszczają. Uważajcie!!!*  
*[A month of negotiations has brought no results. The seller should be monitored by Allegro.pl authorities or even by prosecution –cf. producing counterfeit coins. I think there might be hundreds of deceived clients but they simply let go because of negligible losses. Beware!]*

*Cyfroman w "o mnie" pisze, że aparaty pochodzą bezpośrednio z Jap. Otrzymałem aparat "M. in China" b. instrukcji i tylko z dwoma językami ang. i jap. Nie chcę zwrotu pieniędzy, ale próby kontaktu każą mi przestrzec. Kupujcie gdzie indziej*  
*[In the 'About me' section, Cyfroman (the seller's username – A.W.) writes that the cameras come straight from Japan. I received one 'made in China' operating in two languages only – English and Japanese, without the manual. I don't want my money back, but my attempts at contacting him lead me to Warn you. Shop somewhere else]*

Second, they support the view that one utterance can perform multiple functions at once and their conventional categorisation may result in "inappropriate view of what speakers do with utterances" (Brown and Yule 1983: 233). Third, Brown and Yule accuse Speech Act Theory of failing to explain "how a particular set of linguistic elements, uttered in a particular conversational context, comes to receive a particular interpreted meaning" (ibid.).

Schiffrin (1994) sides with Brown and Yule (1983) on the issue of a single utterance being multifunctional and justifies such a claim within discourse analysis:

*"[s]ome utterances have multiple functions because one act is being performed by way of another: they are called "indirect" speech acts. The conditions underlying speech acts provide an analytical resource for indirectness (...) When more than one act is performed by a single utterance, the conditions for the two speech acts nevertheless have a systematic relationship*



to one another. Thus (...) relationships between underlying conditions (...) allow utterances to do more than one thing at a time" (Schiffrin 1994: 60).

This is observable in my data as well: the speech acts (and the resultant strategies) often cannot be labelled in a clear-cut manner. Categories do indeed overlap and it would rather be narrow-minded and short-sighted to decide that e.g. the speech act of ridiculing (or the 'ridicule other' strategy) excludes the speech acts of criticising or downgrading (or strategies called 'criticise other' or 'downgrade other' respectively). As Schiffrin (1994: 85) states later on, utterances may carry multiple speech acts because the underlying conditions for those speech acts are interconnected, so the "one form for one function" approach might well be replaced with "one form for many functions" or "many forms for one function."

Elsewhere, the author highlights the link between speech act theory and discourse analysis:

"speech act theory offers an approach to discourse analysis in which what is said is chunked (or segmented) into units that have communicative functions that can be identified or labelled. Although we can describe such acts in different ways (e.g. as realizations of constitutive rules, as the product of form-function relations, as the outcome of different textual and contextual conditions), the import of such acts for discourse is that they both initiate and respond to other acts. Acts specify (to a certain degree) what kind of response is expected: they create options for a next utterance each time they are performed, and thus provide a local, sequentially emergent basis for discourse. Since an utterance can also perform more than one act at a time, a single utterance creates different response options for a next utterance. (...) Mappings between one form and multiple functions thus gives our exchanges a certain degree of flexibility: if we don't respond to one possible speech act interpretation of what someone has said to us, we may respond to another (...) a single sequence of utterances may actually be the outcome of a fairly wide range of different underlying functional relationships" (Schiffrin 1994: 90-91).

I support this point of view, because it is helpful in securing a place for my data within discourse analysis and justifies its status as a piece of discourse.

In her discussion of conversational exercitives, McGowan (2004) also states that it is possible to ascribe more than one illocutionary force to one utterance and clarifies the mechanism behind indirect speech acts:

"The canonical account of indirect speech acts (...) maintains that such utterances have multiple forces. Saying, for example, "Can you pass the salt?" during a meal is, on this account, both literally a question about the addressee's abilities and an indirect request that the addressee pass the salt. If, however, one is especially wary of multiple forces, there are a variety of ways to avoid a commitment to them (2004: 102)."

Lindblom (2001: 1605) predicts three ways of looking at discourse itself: as 'utterance,' as 'social interaction' and finally as 'social context.' In doing so, he adapts the classification proposed in Young et al. (1970), who in turn describes three possible ways of viewing an experience: as a particle, a wave or a field. Taking Lindblom's understanding of discourse, we would probably have to categorize my data into the 'discourse as social interaction'

view. In this category, Lindblom also enumerates: politeness theories, feminist works, question processing, studies in rhetoric and composition that build upon Grice's Cooperative Principle. Furthermore, he notes that "the 'nuclear unit' for those interested in discourse as social interaction appears to be the exchange. These scholars do not consider whether the speaker's intention is more noteworthy than the meaning of the words themselves, but consider the language as it moves between the speaker and the hearer" (ibid.). In this explanation, he mentions politeness theories only, yet I see no problem in impoliteness theories being accommodated in that category as well. What is more, the exchange (or basic unit) is the very core of my analysis, and Lindblom's findings seem to be compatible with my data. However, his claims about intention do not really agree with my reading of impoliteness on the basis of the data analysis. In fact, I believe that intention and then its recognition are quite indispensable here for the reader to correctly interpret this sort of impoliteness.

### **3.4. Spoken versus written discourse**

Many scholars introduce a distinction between spoken vs. written discourse, for instance Brown and Yule (1983: 4-10), Cook (1989). Some authors, nevertheless, are of the opinion that this distinction is not as clear cut as it seems and propose viewing it as a continuum (Biber 1988, McCarthy 2001, Paltridge 2006). In my opinion, my data could be situated somewhere in between. At first glance, it would appear that it belongs to written discourse, since it is situated in the internet context. However, the comments very often have a special 'spoken' quality and a sense of urgency about them, because their authors are often emotionally involved in the conflict and very spontaneous in publishing their feedback. It might seem that this acting impulsively is responsible for a special "write first, think later" attitude, though this of course is purely conjecture and cannot be measured and evaluated in an academic fashion.

This spoken character of the activity is further emphasized by multiple exclamation marks in some comments (e.g. I/1, XIV/1b, XXV/3) and emoticons, in examples such as XXVIII/6, which uses a 'sad face' emoticon to manifest unhappiness with the transaction, or more interestingly, XXVIII/7, in which a 'smiley' reflects the client's sarcasm. Another instance is the use of block capitals throughout the comment or in some of its words, which is the equivalent of screaming at the opponent and stands in opposition to netiquette (cf. the next section).

### 3.5. Computer-mediated source, CMC and netiquette

Another issue connected with my examples is that they come from an internet source, or a computer-mediated source. Graham (2008: 285) highlights specific features of computer-mediated communication (CMC) from the point of view of Netiquette. She observes that the computer context is a specific environment where there is no prosody, so "[g]uidelines for Netiquette offer alternative strategies for how to prevent misunderstanding – e.g., through the use of emoticons (smileys), text-based approximations of interactional markers (e.g., <g> for grin, CAPITALS for shouting, etc." (ibid.). At the same time, however, she admits that the scarcity of "adequate tools to approximate paralinguistic and non-verbal messages" may cause difficulties in assigning intent to the speaker (ibid.), and the asynchronicity of communication via email, which, as she observes,

"can be problematic when participants post messages in which their intent is unclear. Even if a person doesn't *intend* to be impolite, if others interpret his/her message as impolite and respond in kind, the resulting conflict may have spiralled past the point where clarification by the original writer is sufficient to end the discussion. This differs from a face-to-face setting where paralinguistic cues are likely to make interpretations of (im)politeness clear fairly quickly and so allow for quicker resolution (positive or negative)" (Graham 2008: 286-287).

Graham's claims fit my data, but only partly, as the users apparently wish to be impolite and do not hide or mask their motivations, so their intent is clear from the beginning.

Additionally, she observes that CMC involves the possibility of attracting multiple audiences to any given post (Graham 2008: 286). This applies to my data, as obviously the after-transaction feedback can be read by any Allegro.pl user, or any internet user, for that matter. However, the most interested persons would be prospective buyers or sellers.

Graham also recalls the notion of "flaming," as defined by Shea (1994: 43): "what people do when they express a strongly held opinion without holding back any emotion. Tact is not its objective." These messages, which include taboo language and direct face-attacks, are often viewed as extremely face-threatening.

My data partly corresponds to this definition of "flaming:" it undoubtedly contains some taboo language. However, face attacks therein need not be direct only, as the exchanges display a mixture of directness and indirectness, which seems to contradict Shea's explanation. Indirect impoliteness can be, it seems, as face-threatening as direct one.

Moreover, Graham notes that initially CMC used to display a bigger tendency towards flaming than it would in face-to-face communication (Graham 2008: 287). In stating so, she agrees with Dery's (1994: 1) observations on the phenomenon:

"the wraithlike nature of electronic communication – the flesh become word, the sender reincarnated as letter on a terminal screen – accelerates the escalation of hostilities once tempers flare; disembodied, sometimes pseudonymous combatants tend to feel that they can hurl insults with impunity (at least without fear of bodily harm."

It would seem that my data also complies with this observation, as there is some degree of anonymity: every Allegro.pl user can use a username (or pseudonym) that bears no relation to his/her real first name or surname, which gives them freedom to offend other people as they see fit. Presumably, they would not be so defiant and offensive if they were talking to their opponents face to face.

#### **4. Indirectness**

In this section, I intend to present an account of indirectness in pragmatics from the point of view of speech act theory, the Gricean, or Cooperative Principle-based approach to utterance interpretation and finally Relevance Theory. On that basis, I wish to delineate an approach to indirectness that corresponds to what is observable in my data.

##### **4.1. The first accounts of indirectness**

###### **4.1.1 Austin (1962) and Searle (1975)**

Austin (1962) is believed to be one of the first authors to discuss indirectness and speech acts in pragmatics because of introducing, among many other terms, a distinction between primary performatives<sup>20</sup> and implicit performatives. He also suggests the notions of locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary acts (cf. the previous chapter, section on speech acts), which also explain a lot about indirectness in communication.

Searle (1975) further explored Austin's ideas and differentiated between direct and indirect speech acts, which could be considered the next stage of the development of the primary vs. implicit performatives distinction. He also introduced the illocutionary force indicating devices, or lexical devices which code the illocutionary force of a given act.

###### **4.1.2. Grice (1975)**

The next breakthrough in this field was made by Grice (1975), who introduced his Cooperative Principle (henceforth the CP), its four maxims and conversational implicature.

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<sup>20</sup> Levinson (1983) renames them 'explicit performatives.'

He attributes utterance interpretation to first, being rational and second, being cooperative, or shaping the conversational contribution in accordance with the requirements of the situation: "Make your conversation contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice 1989: 26). The four maxims, adjuncts to the CP, are: Quantity (giving as much information as is required and no more than is required), Quality (being truthful, not saying something for which we lack adequate evidence), Relevance (being relevant) and Manner (being clear, unambiguous and orderly) (Grice 1989: 28). If any of the maxims is not observed, it could result in this maxim being flouted, violated or infringed. Flouting a maxim gives rise to conversational implicature, or intended indirect speaker's meaning, which the addressee has to figure out.

## **4.2. Critical assessment of the first accounts**

### **4.2.1. Gricean pragmatics**

#### **4.2.1.1. Thomas (1995)**

Thomas (1995) sees good and bad points in major indirectness models proposed in Grice's, Austin's and Searle's accounts. She takes a more mitigated and distanced approach towards indirectness, based on a distinction between rules and principles. She is in favour of talking about indirectness (and pragmatics in general) in terms of principles, not rules (Thomas 1995: 105-114),<sup>21</sup> which, in her opinion, are less formal, avoid clear-cut distinctions and maintain balance.

She also produces conflicting and disturbing examples from real life data which seem to contradict, or at least disclose problematic areas, in the Gricean model of indirectness, which she finds too rigid and inconsistent. The most serious accusations are: problems with distinguishing between types of non-observance: we do not know, and Grice does not specify, how we are to distinguish between a maxim being flouted, violated or infringed (Thomas 1995: 90). Secondly, she observes that maxims overlap, which is quite a serious criticism of the CP; sometimes it is hard to decide which maxim is involved in a given situation, especially Quantity and Manner tend to co-occur (Thomas 1995: 91-92). However, she does not explore this topic in greater detail. As a result, we do not know whether there are any other common overlaps and how in general overlapping of the maxims influences the (im)polite reading or illocutionary force, and that is probably beyond the scope of

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. also Givón (1979) and Brown and Yule's (1983: 22-23) discussion of rules vs. regularities.

Thomas's study. Thomas also notes that Relevance is a maxim that appears to be in operation all the time, since in our contributions we are always relevant to what was said in the past and "unless you assume that a contribution is in some way relevant to what has gone before, you will not look for an implicature." (Thomas 1995: 92). What is more, she points out that one utterance may have a wide array of possible readings and states that it is hard to figure out whether the speaker deliberately flouts a maxim and consequently, whether an implicature is intended at all (Thomas 1995: 88-90). Thomas also highlights the different nature of the maxims and the resulting different requirements as to how to observe them or degrees of their observance (Thomas 1995: 88, 91).

By and large, she accuses the CP of being ineffective and imperfect: "in the end, what are we left with is a set of very informal procedures for calculating conversational implicature, which cannot really withstand close scrutiny and (...) the theory is full of holes, some of which have yet to be plugged" (Thomas 1995: 93).

Thomas also criticizes Searle and raises several serious problems with his theory (Thomas 1995: 93-114)." Firstly, any attempt to amend all the imperfections in his model, i.e. trying to add more conditions for producing various speech acts, might ultimately lead to a collection of ad-hoc rules. Besides, sometimes it is not possible to set the boundaries between speech acts. What is more, the indirect speech act framework may, paradoxically, rule out good and proper usages of some speech acts and endorse wrong or "anomalous" uses. Another problem is that certain acts do overlap and one verb can cover a wider range of different acts (Thomas 1995: 95). Her general conclusion on the topic is as follows:

"it is often the case in pragmatics that the most interesting effects are achieved when categories overlapped or are blurred (...) it is a mistake to sacrifice the potential to exploit all the potential richness of meaning of speech acts for the sake of (the appearance of) a tidy system of rules" (Thomas 1995: 105).

#### **4.2.1.2. Matsumoto (1989)**

According to Matsumoto (1989), Grice is too Eurocentric and his theory is not applicable to e.g. the Japanese culture:

"Grice's analysis is based solely on the propositional content or on what is said and unsaid. In Japanese, however, politeness expressions are not simply additions to a neutral utterance which conveys the propositional content: rather, the structure of the language requires some choice of expression that conveys additional information on the social context. The second point is that expectations of the participants and the audience toward the choice in forms of verbs vary depending on conversational situations. If an utterance does not conform to what is generally

expected in a certain situation, a kind of implicature arises, which Grice's theory does not consider (Matsumoto 1989: 208)."

Furthermore, she claims that Grice's framework is more applicable to speaker-oriented languages like English, wherein "the choice of expression is mainly determined by the proposition that the speaker chooses to express" (Matsumoto 1989: 215). This particular criticism has also been voiced by other scholars, who accuse Grice of ignoring and neglecting Asian and other non-Anglo-Saxon cultures.

#### **4.2.1.3. Bousfield (2008)**

Bousfield (2008), who bases his approach and methodology on Grice's theory,<sup>22</sup> states that the CP is "the best way of understanding and accounting for implicature being what was meant beyond what is said" (Bousfield 2008: 32). He also refutes the belief that the CP is about 'social goal sharing,' i.e. the speaker and the intended addressee sharing some objective which is far more than just efficient message communication (Bousfield 2008: 25-29). In his words, if this were true, there would be no cases of conflicting goals, non-cooperation or impoliteness in interaction. Therefore, the CP is first and foremost about linguistic goal sharing,<sup>23</sup> which he understands similarly to Thomas (1986), whose definition of the term he paraphrases in the following words: "[u]se language in such a way that your interlocutor can understand what you are stating, presupposing or implying" (Bousfield 2008: 29). Bousfield argues that "one needs to be cooperative, in the linguistic sense, to communicate a lack of cooperation in a social sense, i.e. when one is, for example, arguing with, or being impolite to, an interlocutor" (Bousfield 2008: 29); so we are cooperative regardless of whether we are polite or not, and for impoliteness to be understood as such, it has to be communicated as well.

Furthermore, he notices that the maxims themselves seem to be relative to the situations, the context and crucially, to the participants of the communicative event, so it could be viewed as quite subjective (Bousfield 2008: 30).

#### **4.2.1.4. Leech (1983)**

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<sup>22</sup> Bousfield, in fact, accuses Relevance Theory of conceptual incoherence (2008: 32), after Turner (2000) and Xie (2003: 813).

<sup>23</sup> By stating this, he disagrees with e.g. Kasher (1976, 1977), Fraser (1990), Watts (2003), Fish (1999) or Apostel (1980). Also, he accuses Watts (2003: 20, 203) of confusing, misusing and misunderstanding the term 'social goal sharing' (Bousfield 2008: 26).

Leech (1983) introduces his Politeness Principle as a vital supplement to Grice's CP, which he accuses of neglecting the politeness aspect of interaction (cf. Chapter I). Also, in his discussion of the Tact Maxim (Leech 1983: 107), he observes that indirectness successfully accounts for the asymmetries of polite behaviour in interaction, in which it aids politeness maxims. He introduces an indirectness scale, on which the indirectness of a given speech act is inversely proportional to its politeness, as "[i]ndirect illocutions tend to be more polite (a) because they give the hearer more options, and (b) because the more indirect an illocution is, the more diminished and tentative its force seems to be" (Leech 1983: 107-108). He also attributes the use of indirectness to negative politeness, as it gives the hearer options and a possibility to refuse.

He also makes one point which may be crucial in examining my data: the possibility of being indirect and impolite at the same time. When proposing actions which are beneficial to the hearer, the direct *Have another sandwich* is more polite than e.g. the indirect *Would you mind having another sandwich?* (Leech 1983: 109).

#### **4.2.1.5. The Principle of Indirect Means**

Another approach to indirectness within the Austinian (and subsequently Gricean) framework, proposed by Frajzyngier and Jirsa (2006), is the Principle of Indirect Means, a culture-specific phenomenon common to many languages. As the authors explain (2006: 514), it does not have to be motivated by politeness concerns alone:

"there is abundant evidence that indirect means of expression, although used to code politeness, are also used in functions unrelated to politeness. Therefore, the use of indirect means of expression cannot be motivated solely by politeness, although politeness may be one of the outcomes of the application of the Principle of Indirect Means (...) we propose that in some languages the Principle of Indirect Means is the choice of forms of expression among adults."

First, direct means of expressions are defined in the following fashion: "[a] form is the direct means of encoding a functional domain if that functional domain is invoked explicitly, by using the form alone and without reference to the context of the utterance" (Frajzyngier and Jirsa 2006: 517). In contrast, indirect means refer to "those means that are deployed for the expression of a given functional domain, but that grammatically or lexically are direct means of some other domain" (Frajzyngier and Jirsa 2006: 518). The Principle is defined in the following way: "if for a given semantic or pragmatic function, form A codes this function, do not use form A to express the function coded by form A" (ibid.).



It is also important to mention an array of coding means available in a given language, i.e. all devices used in order to code meaning and pragmatic functions, related to: phonology, prosody, the lexicon, morphemes and their ordering, inflection and derivation. The authors claim that in some languages there is undeniable proof that the principle works and adduce three major arguments to make their point (Frajzyngier and Jirsa 2006: 518-520). Firstly, there exists more than one form of reference for the speaker, the hearer, and the third person, and "[i]f there were more than one form for a given person, number, or gender, that might indicate that one form came to replace another" (Frajzyngier and Jirsa 2006: 520). Secondly, it is observable that a given term of reference can be used with respect to persons other than those that are allowed paradigmatically, which might suggest that for some reason the paradigmatic form for a given person was not used. Lastly, historically speaking, the terms of reference have not always been stable, as "[i]f pronouns were historically unstable, one of the reasons, perhaps the major one, would be that over time, each pronoun was conceived as a direct means, and was replaced by another, less direct form" (ibid.).

This principle accounts for a big number of coding means in some domains in a given language, (they may be scarce in other domains), the usage of taboo terms, address forms, forms of reference to people, personal pronouns, grammaticalisation, deontic modality and metaphors (Frajzyngier and Jirsa 2006: 519, 539).

#### **4.2.2. Criticisms of Grice's approach within the Relevance Theoretic framework**

Watts (2003: 203-208) acknowledges the concept of implicature and the Cooperative Principle; however, he also voices quite a few criticisms. As he observes, "[i]f we follow the Gricean CP, there is no way of knowing not only *how* the addressee will derive the implicature, but even *what* implicature or implicatures s/he is likely to derive. We are, after all, *both* jointly responsible for maintaining the equilibrium of social relationships" (Watts 2003: 207). Moreover, he states that the CP is too rigid and unable to capture the dynamic, ongoing and ever-changing nature of human conversation with its constant redefinition and renegotiation of power relationships between its participants. Politeness (mentioned here, as many politeness theories build upon Grice) understood as facework does not depend on individual utterances; it is rather "a constantly negotiable commodity in verbal practice" (ibid.). Being a proponent of Relevance Theory, he sees it a liberation from "the limits of Gricean rationality in which we are constantly measuring what we say against the possible

reactions of the addressee" (Watts 2003: 212). However, he points out one limitation connected with Relevance Theory: it seldom deals with stretches of natural verbal interaction (ibid.).

#### **4.2.2.1. Relevance Theory and indirectness**

Sperber and Wilson (1986, 2004) do not accept the opinion that we arrive at the speaker's meaning on the basis of observance, or non-observance, of the Gricean maxims. The basic tenet of Relevance Theory is that the whole process of interpreting utterances takes place thanks to two principles that are always in operation: the Cognitive Principle of Relevance and the Communicative Principle of Relevance.

The Cognitive Principle of Relevance states that human communication boils down to the maximization of relevance and minimization of the processing effort involved (Wilson and Sperber 2002: 256). The Communicative Principle of Relevance states that human communication is ostensive-inferential, or, as Szehidewicz puts it, "built out of a number of ostensive acts/stimuli that can be mutually manifest to the participants in a given interaction" (Szehidewicz 2015: 64). Any ostensive act or stimulus always carries the presumption of its optimal relevance (Wilson and Sperber 2002: 259). The term 'ostensive stimulus' does not refer to utterances only, but to any type of input that changes our individual representation of the world, thus forming a positive cognitive effect (e.g. coming up with a conclusion, learning some information etc.). As the authors postulate, positive cognitive effects comprise "enrichments, revisions and reorganizations of existing beliefs and plans, which improve the organism's knowledge and capacity for successful action" (Sperber and Wilson 2002: 13). The next step would be contextual implications, which can be figured out on the basis of the context combined with the given input. The process of comprehension is explained in Sperber and Wilson (2004):

"there may be implicatures to identify, illocutionary indeterminacies to resolve, metaphors and ironies to interpret. All this requires an appropriate set of contextual assumptions, which the hearer must also supply. The Communicative Principle of Relevance and the definition of optimal relevance suggest a practical procedure for performing these subtasks and constructing a hypothesis about the speaker's meaning. The hearer should take the linguistically encoded sentence meaning; following a path of least effort, he should enrich it at the explicit level and complement it at the implicit level until the resulting interpretation meets his expectation of relevance" (Sperber and Wilson 2004: 613).

Like Grice, Relevance Theorists also believe that there is some explicit content and some implicit content to every utterance. The difference between those two stances is that for

Relevance Theorists the implicit and the explicit are not as clearly demarcated, or as Bach (2010: 132) notes, "explicitness is a matter of degree."

Escandell-Vidal (1996, 1998b) challenges Leech's (1983) idea of an iconic indirectness – politeness link, as her politeness framework draws on Relevance Theory. She maintains that the correct interpretation of an indirect speech act is not always easy or predictable, which results in questioning the very notion of indirectness altogether. At this point, she also recalls previous scholars' struggles with properly defining indirectness (or indirect speech acts), which led to the distinction between conventional vs. non-conventional indirect speech acts, discussed in e.g. Bach and Harnish (cf. Bach and Harnish 1979) (Escandell-Vidal 1996: 633). In her opinion, Relevance Theory is the best tool with which to investigate politeness phenomena specifically because terms such as *indirectness* or *speech act* simply do not belong there; moreover, within this framework, "linguistic forms do not directly encode illocutionary forces, but merely serve as a guide for interpretation, i.e. as a constraint on relevance" (Escandell-Vidal 1996: 637), therefore it is better to do away with indirectness as such.

One claim which she makes in Escandell-Vidal (2004: 350) serves as a good conclusion: "[u]nlike Grice's, Sperber and Wilson's principles are always in force, so implicatures can never arise as a result of flouting them."

#### **4.2.2.2. Relevance Theory and underdeterminacy**

According to Grundy (2000: 9), underdeterminacy means that "an utterance might typically have one of several different possible meanings, and that the inferences we draw determine which of these possible meanings is the one the addressee thinks the speaker is intending." However, later on he seems to be using the terms 'underdeterminacy' and 'indeterminacy' interchangeably. In her discussion of underdeterminacy, Carston (2002) addresses this issue by differentiating between these two notions. To her, indeterminacy is connected with some of the other sources of the linguistic underdeterminacy of propositional form, with e.g. weak implicatures, or implicatures that have not necessarily been intended by the speaker but have been drawn anyway.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, there is also referential, predication or conceptual indeterminacy, or sometimes 'vagueness' or 'generality of sense.' Carston

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<sup>24</sup> Sperber and Wilson (1986: 217-24) also talk about weak implicatures in connection with poetic effects, while Blakemore (1992) associates indeterminacy and vagueness with weak implicatures and poetic effects.

also puts forward the underdeterminacy thesis, which, in short, claims that linguistic meaning underdetermines what is said; or "the meaning encoded in the linguistic expressions used, the relatively stable meanings in a linguistic system, (...) widely shared across a community of users of the system, underdetermines the proposition expressed" (Carston 2002: 19-20) and it takes pragmatic inference for the hearer to arrive at the implicated and the directly expressed.

Her understanding of the term involves an important division into two views. The first one, called the convenient-abbreviation view, predicts that an underdetermined sentence always entails some longer structure, i.e. an eternal sentence (proposition-determining, context-insensitive), which fully encodes the meaning of the words on the utterance level, but the underdetermined, shorter version is used for the sake of economy. The second, essentialist one, states that underdeterminacy is essential in the link between a linguistic expression and a proposition portrayed by this expression. Moreover, for any thought or proposition, it is impossible to think of a sentence that would fully encode it, or an eternal sentence. Within this view, we can distinguish two versions: a stronger one and a weaker one. The former predicts that underdeterminacy is universal and it is not possible for any sentence to ever encode the thought or proposition it expresses. The latter claims that although underdeterminacy is common and widespread, there nevertheless exist a few sentences that fully encode the proposition they are used to express (Carston 2002: 29). She favours the essentialist view and specifically its stronger version, explaining that "public-language systems are intrinsically underdetermining of complete (semantically evaluable) thoughts because they evolved, as it were, of an already well-developed cognitive capacity for forming hypotheses about the thoughts and intentions of others on the basis of their behaviour" (Carston 2002: 30).

### **4.3. Conclusions**

Taking all those observations about indirectness into account, I would conclude that the reading of indirectness that best seems to agree with my data is the opinion about Searle (1975) expressed in Thomas (1995), especially her remarks about unclear boundaries between speech acts. Importantly, Thomas also presents a list of reasons and motivations for using indirectness: first, the wish to make one's language more (or less) interesting, second, increasing the force of one's message, third, competing goals, and fourth, politeness and

concern for face (Thomas 1995: 143-146). I would consider the first two of them applicable to my data. Allegro.pl users opt for indirectness in order to make their remarks even more vivid and memorable through the choice of structure and vocabulary (the first motivation), which makes their comments more convincing (the second motivation). I have a slightly different understanding of the third motivation: the clients and the sellers who argue obviously do have conflicting goals, but Thomas's discussion of the problem appears a bit too short and sketchy and is supported with an example of a face-saving situation, where politeness, and not impoliteness, is at stake. As for the last motivation, I would broaden it by including the term 'impoliteness' and intentional face attack.

When it comes to the choice between the Gricean and Relevance-Theoretic frameworks, I would favour the Gricean CP, but in a more revised form, as suggested by Thomas (1995) or Bousfield (2008), whose approach towards maxims, less clear-cut and more flexible than Grice's, is reliable and persuasive: Thomas points out that Gricean CP should be modified as: maxims have a tendency to co-occur, that at times it is hard to state which maxims are involved and there exist problems with calculating the implicature and assigning intention, while Bousfield (2008: 29), after Thomas (1986), sees the CP as a model for linguistic cooperation, which he deems indispensable in attaining an understanding of both politeness and impoliteness.

## CHAPTER III

### DATA ANALYSIS: INDIRECT IMPOLITENESS STRATEGIES

#### 1. Introduction

This chapter deals with the data analysis proper. Its main objective is to present strategies found in my data which combine indirectness and impoliteness. I have divided them into three major groups according to the following criteria: speech acts (section 2), rhetorical devices (section 3) and purely linguistic devices, or means (section 4). These broad categories are further divided into specific strategies and, if needed, further into substrategies, along with explanations why a subdivision was considered necessary, based on what has been observed in the data. I discuss the strategies and substrategies in detail, explaining how exactly the indirect impolite effect is achieved, with the use of examples selected from the appendix. Every strategy is represented by at least one example. On some occasions, a single comment is used; on others, I adduce the whole exchange to show how impoliteness is shaped in a longer chunk of discourse. Every strategy is named and every name is accompanied by a list of examples from the appendix that represent this given strategy.

#### 2. Speech acts

**2.1. Negate other** (examples: XV/4, XIV/2, XVII/3, XXIV/9, XXVI/1, XXVI/3, XXVI/5, XXVI/10, XXVI/12, XXVII/9, XXVII/13, XXVIII/5, XXVIII/6, XXVIII/10, XXVIII/13b, XXVIII/17, XXIX/5, XXIX/10, XXIX/32, XXIX/33, XXX/2, XXX/3, XXX/6a-c, XXX/14, XXX/19, XXX/20, XXX/29, XXX/32, XXX/33, XXXI/7, XXXI/9, XXXI/15, XXXI/18, XXXI/21, XXXI/25, XXXI/28, XXXI/40, XXXII/6, XXXII/7, XXXII/20b, XXXII/22, XXXII/23, XXXII/24, XXXII/39a-b, XXXIII/9, XXXIII/11, XXXIII/13, XXXIII/17, XXXIII/18, XXXIII/26, XXXIII/28, XXXIII/33, XXXIII/36a-b, XXXIII/37, XXXIII/38, XXXIII/43, XXXIII/44, XXXIII/47, XXXIII/48, XXXIII/49a-b, XXXIII/50, XXXIII/56, XXXIII/59, XXXIII/60, XXXIII/61, XXXIII/67, XXXIV/17, XXXIV/18, XXXIV/22, XXXIV/35, XXXIV/50, XXXIV/55, XXXIV/63, XXXIV/84, XXXIV/91, XXXIV/92, XXXIV/93, XXXIV/113, XXXIV/117, XXXIV/118, XXXIV/120, XXXIV/121, XXXIV/124, XXXIV/127, XXXIV/132, XXXIV/136, XXXIV/146, XXXIV/148, XXXIV/149, XXXIV/156, XXXIV/161)

As a strategy, negation is close to Culpeper's strategy labelled *Seek disagreement* (Culpeper 1996: 357), or, as Bousfield puts it, *Seek disagreement / Avoid agreement* (Bousfield 2008: 108-112). It is a strongly direct and unambiguous impoliteness strategy. Still, in the data collection, negation also serves to convey impolite beliefs indirectly, i.e. to portray the adversary in a negative light via an implicature. Within the 'Allegro.pl altercations set', the basic unit of analysis comprises a comment by the buyer and a reply by the seller, so it is only logical that negation should be observed in the seller's utterance. Therefore, the buyer's feedback will usually serve as the source of the words, phrases or sequences negated, whilst the seller's responses will be examined as principal 'carriers' of impoliteness. On some occasions, the very 'object of negation' remains unchanged; on others, it is modified by the seller to fit their impolite intention.

The most common instance of this strategy is simply quoting the buyer's words and embedding them in, or preceding them with, a negation. Since multiple negation is allowed in Polish, it is often employed here, and arguably it helps to enhance the impoliteness effect. The use of multiple negation is exemplified in the exchange below (both utterances are fragments of longer comments):

- (1) Buyer: *Na prośbę o odszkodowanie (...) zostałem wyśmiany!*  
 Seller: *nikt nigdy nie został przez nas wyśmiany.*  
 [Buyer: *When I asked for compensation (...) I was ridiculed!*  
 Seller: *no one has ever been ridiculed by us*]

Here, the response repeats the more indirect passive structure. The impolite force of the reply is enhanced by multiple negation (which is marked, as it was not obligatory), carried out by three lexical items: the personal negative pronoun *nikt*, the negative particle *nie* and negative adverb *nigdy*. The purpose is not only to negate the adversary's words, but also to contradict him and deny his accusations. Finally, the effect could be labelled self-polite<sup>25</sup>, since the implicature could be formulated as: 'You are wrong, we never do this, because this is not our style and because we offer high quality services.'

In (2), the seller changes the fragment negated in order to make his/her point more clearly and to defend himself / herself successfully:

- (2) Buyer [pią 02 lip 2010 11:01:59 CEST] *Przestrzegam wszystkich! Z winy dorianDVD [i.e. the seller – A.W.] nie doszło do transakcji, więc wystawiłem im neutralny komentarz. W rewanżu otrzymałem negatywa. Następnie zasugerowali, że jeśli zmienię swój komentarz, to oni zmieniają swój. NIE POLECAM!*  
 Seller: [Odpowiedź z:pią 02 lip 2010 11:04:34 CEST] *Nie z naszej winy nie doszło do*

<sup>25</sup> Self-politeness as an impoliteness strategy is discussed on p. 95.

*transakcji to po pierwsze, po drugie - szkoda, że klient nie skorzystał z żadnych zaproponowanych przez nas rozwiązań tylko bezmyślnie wystawia tego typu komentarz.*<sup>26</sup>  
*[Buyer: I'm warning everybody! It was [the seller's username]'s fault that the transaction didn't come off, so I posted a neutral comment. As an act of revenge, I got a negative one. Then they suggested that if I changed my comment they would change theirs. I DON'T RECOMMEND THEM!]*  
*Seller: It wasn't our fault that the transaction didn't come off – that's first; second – it's a shame the client didn't use any of the solutions we offered and just posts a thoughtless comment instead.]*

Here, the fragment negated in the seller's response is slightly modified: 'dorianDVD,' the seller's username, is replaced by the possessive adjective *naszej*, while most of this fragment remains unchanged. The purpose of this repetition is to shift the blame and responsibility for the unfortunate transaction, so that it is the buyer, not the seller, that seems to be at fault.

## 2.2. Criticise other

As a separate strategy, criticizing other is discussed in Bousfield (2008: 126-131). Indirect criticisms appear in my data on numerous occasions and could be divided into two broad categories: critiques produced by buyers (over 790 examples in total, where many of the types of criticisms co-occur) and critiques produced by sellers (131 examples). The buyers intend to portray the sellers as unprofessional, while the sellers wish to defend their self-face, and also one specific face aspect linked to their image as a worker, which I would call professional face. It could be argued that the speech act 'criticise other' itself coincides with 'accuse other' as it is hard to draw a line between them. The coexistence of various strategies or speech acts in one utterance (or piece of discourse) is acknowledged by many scholars (e.g. Schiffrin 1994: 76-91, Bousfield 2008).

### 2.2.1. Criticisms issued by buyers

Such criticisms can fall into three types. Starting from Chen's (2001: 88) understanding of 'self,' it can be argued that the term 'other' may also be extended to include 'everything connected with other', i.e. not just the person themselves, but all the matters pertaining to him/her: business-wise, service-wise and, finally, goods-wise. Thus if the buyer criticizes anything to do with the transaction, he/she will indirectly criticize the seller as well.

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<sup>26</sup> The spelling, punctuation and grammar of the comments presented have all been left unchanged.



**2.2.1.1. Criticise the seller** (examples: III/1, XIV/1a-b, XV/2, XV/3, XVIII/1, XIX/5, XXVI/11, XXVII/3, XXVII/5, XXVIII/2, XXVIII/3, XXVIII/14, XXX/6d, XXX/30, XXXII/2, XXXII/4, XXXII/5, XXXII/10, XXXII/11a-b, XXXII/26, XXXII/28, XXXII/32a-1, XXXII/34, XXXII/35, XXXII/36, XXXII/38, XXXII/42, XXXIII/4, XXXIII/5, XXXIII/8, XXXIII/16a-b, XXXIII/17, XXXIII/24, XXXIII/33, XXXIII/35, XXXIII/39, XXXIII/43, XXXIII/46, XXXIII/59, XXXIV/4, XXXIV/7, XXXIV/8, XXXIV/12, XXXIV/13, XXXIV/15, XXXIV/34, XXXIV/38, XXXIV/43, XXXIV/65, XXXIV/87, XXXIV/112, XXXIV/118, XXXIV/129, XXXIV/144, XXXIV/153, XXXIV/158, XXXIV/163)

This category includes indirect criticisms of the seller's personality and attitude (e.g. the lack of professionalism, involvement or interest, unreliability or unavailability). Moreover, the listing of the auction and its terms and conditions are also often criticized as something created by the seller and, according to Chen's (2001: 88) understanding of 'self,' an extension of the seller's 'self.' Comments such as (3) implicate that the sellers are unprofessional and unreliable:

- (3) Buyer: *kiepski kontakt, brak możliwości odbioru osobistego, zarabianie na kosztach wysyłki.*  
*Unikać tego allegrowicza bo to kpina z człowieka.*  
*[bad contact, no possibility of collecting the item personally, making money on shipment costs.*  
*Avoid this Allegro.pl user because he's a mockery of a human being]*

The object of the criticism here is not only the seller himself but also his terms and conditions of sale. The telegraphic style accounts for impoliteness here; moreover, the insulting description, as well as a warning against the seller, make the criticisms even harsher.

**2.2.1.2. Criticise the goods** (examples: II/1, IV/1, V/1, VI/1, VII/1, VII/2, VIII/1, X/1, X/3, XII/1, XIV/2, XV/3, XV/4, XVI/3, XVII/2a-c, XVIII/3, XVIII/4, XVIII/5, XIX/5, XX/1, XX/2a-b, XX/3, XX/4, XXI/1, XXI/6, XXII/1, XXII/3, XXII/4a-b, XXII/6, XXIII/2, XXIII/7, XXIII/9, XXIV/1, XXIV/2, XXIV/4, XXIV/5, XXIV/6, XXIV/7a-c, XXIV/8, XXIV/10, XXV/2, XXV/4, XXV/6, XXVI/1, XXVI/2, XXVI/5, XXVI/10, XXVI/11, XXVI/12, XXVI/14, XXVII/4, XXVII/5, XXVII/6a-c, XXVII/10, XXVII/11, XXVII/13, XXVII/14a-d, XXVIII/8, XXVIII/15, XXVIII/21, XXVIII/23, XXIX/1, XXIX/3, XXIX/5, XXIX/7, XXIX/8, XXIX/9, XXIX/10, XXIX/18, XXIX/21, XXIX/22, XXIX/23, XXIX/24, XXIX/25, XXIX/26, XXIX/29, XXIX/30, XXIX/31, XXIX/34, XXIX/35, XXX/1, XXX/2, XXX/7, XXX/15, XXX/19, XXX/21, XXX/23, XXXI/2, XXXI/4, XXXI/5, XXXI/6, XXXI/7, XXXI/8, XXXI/12, XXXI/15, XXXI/17, XXXI/18, XXXI/19, XXXI/22, XXXI/23a-b, XXXI/24, XXXI/25, XXXI/30a, XXXI/34, XXXI/35, XXXI/40, XXXII/1, XXXII/3, XXXII/6, XXXII/7, XXXII/8, XXXII/13, XXXII/19, XXXII/22, XXXII/24, XXXII/25, XXXII/35, XXXII/39a-b, XXXIII/3, XXXIII/10, XXXIII/13, XXXIII/14, XXXIII/15, XXXIII/20, XXXIII/21, XXXIII/24, XXXIII/26, XXXIII/30, XXXIII/33, XXXIII/35, XXXIII/36a, XXXIII/38, XXXIII/43, XXXIII/44, XXXIII/45, XXXIII/46, XXXIII/47, XXXIII/48, XXXIII/49a-b, XXXIII/52, XXXIII/55, XXXIII/58, XXXIII/59, XXXIII/61, XXXIII/62, XXXIII/68, XXXIV/5, XXXIV/6, XXXIV/9, XXXIV/16, XXXIV/17, XXXIV/18, XXXIV/20, XXXIV/22, XXXIV/23, XXXIV/26, XXXIV/30, XXXIV/32, XXXIV/41, XXXIV/45, XXXIV/46, XXXIV/48, XXXIV/50, XXXIV/51,

XXXIV/53, XXXIV/55, XXXIV/59, XXXIV/62, XXXIV/63, XXXIV/68, XXXIV/69, XXXIV/71, XXXIV/74, XXXIV/77, XXXIV/84, XXXIV/97, XXXIV/107, XXXIV/109, XXXIV/110, XXXIV/119, XXXIV/120, XXXIV/126, XXXIV/130, XXXIV/132, XXXIV/158)

Such criticisms can refer to the items' supposed poor quality, missing parts, poor condition, the wrong size, colour etc. Sometimes the buyer claims to have received a wrong item (or items), which may have two implications: either deceit or ill will on the seller's part (i.e. the 'mistake' could have been intentional) or the seller's inattention or carelessness, if the wrong goods have been sent by accident. In either case, the seller is also criticized as unprofessional and implicated to be untrustworthy, like in (4):

- (4) *Buyer: Zła jakość materiałów w naszyjnikach, w opisie na allegro nie ma słowa o wyrobach chińskich! (naklejka na opakowaniu) część musiałam naprawiać, nie wiem czy nadadzą się do handlu albo chodzenia. Gratis, zepsuty. + za szybką wysyłkę.*  
[Bad quality of the materials from which the necklaces were made; the Allegro listing doesn't mention Chinese products (see the sticker on the packaging), I had to fix some of them myself, I don't know if they are fit for being sold or worn. The free product broken. + for quick shipment.]

The impoliteness of this comment lies not only in the description of the faulty goods but also in the buyer's statements about the repairs that she had to carry out herself and about her uncertainty whether the goods stand any chance of being used or sold. Those claims indirectly criticize the items, but also the seller herself.

**2.2.1.3. Criticise the service** (examples: I/1, II/1, III/1, VI/1, VI/2, VII/1, VII/2, VIII/1, VIII/2, IX/1, IX/2, X/2, XI/1-XI/3, XII/1-XII/3, XIII/1-XIII/3, XIV/1a-b, XIV/2, XIV/3, XV/1, XV/3, XV/4, XVI/1- XVI/4, XVII/1, XVII/2a-c, XVII/3, XVIII/1, XVIII/3-XVIII/5, XIX/1-XIX/5, XX/1, XX/2a-b, XX/3, XX/5, XXI/1-XXI/6, XXII/1-XXII/3, XXII/4a-b, XXII/5, XXII/6, XXIII/1-XXIII/9, XXIV/1-XXIV/6, XXIV/7a-c, XXIV/8-XXIV/10, XXV/2-XXV/5, XXV/7-XXV/12, XXVI/1-XXVI/14, XXVII/1-XXVII/3, XXVII/5, XXVII/7-XXVII/10, XXVII/12, XXVII/15a-b, XXVIII/1-XXVIII/12, XXVIII/13a, XXVIII/15-XXVIII/23, XXIX/2-XXIX/5, XXIX/6a-b, XXIX/9-XXIX/17, XXIX/19-XXIX/21, XXIX/26, XXIX/28-XXIX/30, XXIX/32, XXIX/34, XXIX/35, XXX/2-XXX/5, XXX/6a-d, XXX/7-XXX/10, XXX/11a-b, XXX/12-XXX/14, XXX/16-XXX/18, XXX/20, XXX/22a-c, XXX/23-XXX/33, XXXI/1, XXXI/3-XXXI/22, XXXI/23a-b, XXXI/25, XXXI/26a-b, XXXI/27-XXXI/29, XXXI/30a-b, XXXI/31-XXXI/34, XXXI/36, XXXI/37a-b, XXXI/38-XXXI/42, XXXII/1-XXXII/7, XXXII/9a-b, XXXII/10, XXXII/11a-c, XXXII/12-XXXII/16, XXXII/17a-b, XXXII/18, XXXII/19, XXXII/20a-b, XXXII/21, XXXII/23-XXXII/26, XXXII/27a-c, XXXII/28-XXXII/31, XXXII/32a-l, XXXII/34, XXXII/36, XXXII/39a, XXXII/40-XXXII/42, XXXIII/1-XXXIII/15, XXXIII/16a-b, XXXIII/17-XXXIII/35, XXXIII/36a-b, XXXIII/37-XXXIII/48, XXXIII/49a, XXXIII/50, XXXIII/51, XXXIII/53, XXXIII/55-XXXIII/69, XXXIV/2-XXXIV/18, XXXIV/19b-c, XXXIV/20-XXXIV/58, XXXIV/62-XXXIV/66, XXXIV/68-XXXIV/140, XXXIV/141a-c, XXXIV/142-XXXIV/146, XXXIV/148-XXXIV/168)

This category includes: wrong and unprofessional packaging and securing the goods, which has or may have caused damage, untimely delivery or even the lack thereof, the wrong shipment option (e.g. when the client had asked for shipment by post, while the seller ignored it and sent a courier instead, etc.) and finally very poor or non-existent contact with the seller. In some cases, this strategy coincides with the previous one, i.e. ‘Criticise the goods.’

In (5), there is a critique of mishandling the goods before their shipment:

- (5) Buyer: *Niestety ale nie profesjonalnie zabezpieczone sadzonki glistnika, a co za tym idzie wszystko dostałem zgnite i nie nadające się do niczego. WSZYSTKO DO KOSZA. Przykro mi ale NEGATYW*  
[Unfortunately the chelidonium cuttings were not secured professionally, so everything I received was rotten and generally useless. EVERYTHING HAD TO GO TO THE WASTEBASKET. I'm sorry - a NEGATIVE comment]

The telegraphic, impersonal style of this negative feedback strengthens the impoliteness of the message. The standard of the service is criticized and, by the same token, the seller is indirectly portrayed as unprofessional, which is a big threat to his/her professional face.

- (6) Buyer: *Paczka przyszła pognieciona. Po jej otwarciu wyroby (gipsowe aniołki) były w kawałkach i do tego mokre. Moge wnioskowac ze odrazu po wyciągnięciu z formy zostały włożone do paczki i nic nie przesuszone. Szkoda było moich pieniędzy.*  
[The parcel which arrived was crumpled. When I opened it, the items (plaster angels) were in pieces and wet. I can assume that right after being taken out of the mould they were simply packed and weren't even dried. That was a waste of my money.]

Here, the aspect criticized is the deplorable condition of the items, which must have been mishandled. Once again, the lack of professionalism and seriousness is pointed out.

- (7) Buyer: *Towar otrzymałem ale U-BOOT ---PIĘKNA OZDOBA CERAMICZNA była w trzech miejscach pęknięta*, pisałem maila w tej sprawie i zero odpowiedzi NIE POLECAM!!!!  
[I did receive the item but the U-BOOT – A BEAUTIFUL CERAMIC ORNAMENT was broken in three places, I mailed the seller about it and zero answers I DON'T RECOMMEND!!!!]

In (7), the buyer points out the supposed faulty delivery of the goods purchased and also presents the seller as unprofessional and not dependable (perhaps also lacking good will).

Sometimes all three subtypes come together in one comment, as in (8):

- (8) Buyer: *Ogólnie wszystko do dupy =)) Przesyłka szła 3 tygodnie !!!!! Oprócz tego przedmiot nie zgadza się z opisem ponieważ w opisie pisało że jest to doskonały wiernie wykonany odlew.... a dostałem jakiś bzdur =/... NIEPOLECAM !!!!!!!*  
[By and large, everything sucked =)) The shipment took 3 weeks!!! Besides, the product is nothing like its description because it said the cast was a perfect and faithful replica and I got some tat =/... I DON'T RECOMMEND!!!!!!]

In this case, the object of criticism is the entire auction: the goods, the service (delayed

delivery), the description in the auctions and logically, the seller. The implicature downgrades the seller and would read: ‘you are unprofessional and untrustworthy.’

**2.2.2. Criticisms issued by sellers** (examples: VII/1, VII/2, XV/1, XVII/2a,c, XVII/3, XVIII/1, XVIII/3, XVIII/4, XVIII/5, XXI/1, XXI/6, XXII/6, XXIV/3, XXIV/10, XXVII/11, XXVII/13, XXVII/14a,d, XXVIII/4, XXVIII/6, XXVIII/11, XXVIII/18, XXIX/4, XXIX/10, XXIX/11, XXIX/12, XXIX/17, XXIX/22, XXIX/27, XXIX/33, XXIX/35, XXX/5, XXX/6a, XXX/7, XXX/8, XXX/10, XXX/17, XXX/18, XXX/19, XXX/24, XXX/25, XXX/26, XXX/27, XXX/29, XXX/31, XXXIV/30, XXX/24, XXXII/5, XXXII/6, XXXII/11, XXXII/14, XXXII/15, XXXII/20a, XXXII/36, XXXII/41, XXXIII/2, XXXIII/3, XXXIII/4, XXXIII/5, XXXIII/6, XXXIII/13, XXXIII/14, XXXIII/23, XXXIII/25, XXXIII/30, XXXIII/36a-b, XXXIII/39, XXXIII/44, XXXIII/51, XXXIII/53, XXXIV/7, XXXIV/10, XXXIV/12, XXXIV/14, XXXIV/25, XXXIV/26, XXXIV/29, XXXIV/31, XXXIV/33, XXXIV/34, XXXIV/37, XXXIV/38, XXXIV/39, XXXIV/40, XXXIV/47, XXXIV/49, XXXIV/50, XXXIV/52, XXXIV/54, XXXIV/64, XXXIV/71, XXXIV/72, XXXIV/73, XXXIV/74, XXXIV/76, XXXIV/78, XXXIV/79, XXXIV/80, XXXIV/87, XXXIV/90, XXXIV/98, XXXIV/103, XXXIV/105, XXXIV/106, XXXIV/107, XXXIV/112, XXXIV/113, XXXIV/116, XXXIV/125, XXXIV/127, XXXIV/128, XXXIV/141a-c, XXXIV/142, XXXIV/143, XXXIV/144, XXXIV/145, XXXIV/150, XXXIV/151, XXXIV/152, XXXIV/153, XXXIV/154, XXXIV/156, XXXIV/157, XXXIV/163, XXXIV/164, XXXIV/166, XXXIV/168)

As could be expected, critiques written by the sellers aim at portraying the buyer in the most negative light possible. There is no need for their further classification as in 2.1. and they could be roughly divided into two types: ‘attitude’ and ‘intellect and/or education.’ As regards attitude, the buyers are usually presented as infantile, not serious enough and ‘spoilt’ (i.e. overly demanding, petty and fussy). In terms of intellect and education, they are shown to be illiterate (or as having reading problems), stupid, uneducated etc.

Example (9) talks about the buyer’s supposedly low level of intellect and skill:

(9) *Dla niektórych za dużo jak widać odkręcenie 1 śrubki żeby zamontować klamrę. Do tego naprawę nie trzeba specjalnych umiejętności. Sam pasek skórzany kosztuje więcej niż tu komplet.*

*[For some, unscrewing one bolt to fix the buckle is obviously too much. It doesn’t really require any special skills. A leather belt costs more than a whole set here.]*

The seller is indirect in their criticism because of introducing a ‘quasi-general statement.’ The buyer’s persona is not brought up here, instead of which we have an indefinite pronoun or determiner *niektórzy* (some (people)). The hedges *jak widać* (apparently) and *naprawdę* (indeed) add a further touch of impoliteness here. The comment suggests that the buyer is not mentally and physically capable of performing a simple action. The overall implicature is: ‘you are stupid and unskilled.’

Example (10) criticises the buyer’s presumed lack of intellectual capacity:

- (10) Seller: [Odpowiedź z: pon 08 paź 2007 16:11:13 CEST] Program ma preselekcję języka na przykład angielski. Po zaistalowaniu można zrobić również uaktualnienie języka poprzez stronę producenta na przykład na język polski. Wszystko to jest zapisane w instrukcji obsługi. Zarzut bezpodstawny.

*Seller: In this program you can pre-select a language, like English. When you install it you can also update the language on the manufacturer's website and choose e.g. Polish. It is all written in the manual. A groundless accusation.]*

These short, official and simple explanations criticize the buyer, ridicule him and present him as intellectually challenged.

At times, more than one critical implicature might come together in one comment, like in (11):

- (11) Klient nie rozumie, co znaczy OGÓLNOKRAJOWE OPÓŹNIENIE DATY PREMIERY, mimo naszych wyjaśnień toczy SPÓR O NIC. Finalnie otrzymuje towar po premierze i jeszcze śmie wystawiać negatyw?

*[The client doesn't understand what a NATIONAL PREMIERE DELAY means and despite our explanations he still continues his argument about nothing. Finally he gets his goods after the premiere and he still dares to issue a negative comment?]*

In this response, we can identify three implicatures: firstly, 'you are intellectually challenged,' secondly, 'you are quarrelsome and fussy,' and finally: 'you are cheeky and insolent.' This comment also includes a rhetorical question.

**2.3. Insult other** (examples: I/1, VII/1, XI/1, XI/2, XI/3, XIV/1a-b, XV/4, XVIII/1, XXII/1, XXII/3, XXII/4b, XXIV/3, XXIV/5, XXVI/9, XXIV/10, XXVI/12, XXVII/1, XXVII/6a, XXVII/13, XXVIII/1, XXVIII/5, XXVIII/6, XXVIII/8, XXVIII/13b, XXVIII/14, XXVIII/22, XXIX/2, XXIX/4, XXIX/11, XXX/7, XXX/25, XXIX/35, XXX/2, XXX/10, XXX/11a-b, XXX/12, XXX/24, XXX/28, XXXI/2, XXXI/4, XXXI/7, XXXI/10, XXXI/12, XXXI/19, XXXI/23a, XXXI/26a, XXXII/4, XXXII/7, XXXII/14, XXXII/17a, XXXII/28, XXXII/29, XXXII/26, XXXII/32h, XXXIII/17, XXXIII/18, XXXIII/28, XXXIII/40, XXXIII/48, XXXIII/52, XXXIV/19a, XXXIV/57, XXXIV/80, XXXIV/106, XXXIV/124, XXXIV/131, XXXIV/132, XXXIV/133, XXXIV/163, XXXIV/164, XXXIV/165)

There is a fine line between accusations and insults, but it could be argued that insults are stronger than accusations. Indirect insulting feedback has to refer to the opponent themselves and their misconduct or supposed unprofessionalism, not the auction, goods and delivery as such.

In my discussion of examples from the Allegro.pl data collection, I intend to concentrate solely on indirect and purposefully complicated insults. Direct insults appear in

the data as well, e.g. *analfabetka*, *żałosny Allegrowicz*, *naciągacz*, *złodziej*, *niepoważna osoba*, (*ta osoba to*) *oszust*, *chamstwo*. Quite a big number of comments represents combinations of direct and indirect impoliteness. The role of direct impoliteness in boosting the overall impoliteness effect cannot be overestimated; however, its instances will not be discussed here. Comments with both direct and indirect insults are issued by both buyers and sellers.

As the first example, let us focus on a comment which has previously been discussed:

- (12) Buyer: *kiepski kontakt, brak możliwości odbioru osobistego, zarabianie na kosztach wysyłki. Unikać tego allegrowicza bo to kpina z człowieka*  
*[bad contact, no possibility of collecting the item personally, making money on shipment costs. Avoid this Allegro.pl user because he's a mockery of a human being]*

The noun phrase *kpina z człowieka* constitutes an indirect insult; the buyer could have chosen a far more direct insulting term, such as *żałosna osoba*, *nie szanuje innych* (*a pathetic person, doesn't respect others*). Instead they opt for a more cryptic expression, which demands a lot of processing effort on the reader's part and implicates 'he is pathetic.'

Example (13) is a fragment of a longer comment:

- (13) Buyer: *Facet bez kręgosłupa. Wystawił 2 szt [sztuki – A.W.] filmu, sprzedał tylko mnie. Nagle oba wypadły z zaczepów i się zepsuły.*  
*[A guy without principles. He put up two copies of the film for an auction and sold them to me only. All of a sudden they both came out of their hinges and got broken.]*

The insulting part, the prepositional phrase *bez kręgosłupa* (without a backbone – A.W.), understood as 'immoral, without any principles' is quite well-entrenched and popular in casual Polish; nevertheless, it is indirect because of its metaphorical meaning. The intended meaning of this non-finite clause is, logically, 'unprincipled.'

The insulting character can also be obtained thanks to general statements, like in (14):

- (14) *Czasem trafiają się tak fatalne osoby jak mickiewiczak.*  
*[From time to time, you come across people who are just as bad as mickiewiczak (the buyers's username – A.W.)]*

Here, instead of stating *mickiewiczak to fatalna osoba*, the seller prefers to use indirectness. The buyer himself, *mickiewiczak*, is presented here as a member of a supposed 'group which consists of pathetic people.'

Insulting other can co-occur with sarcasm, as can be seen in (15):

- (15) Seller: *Wyjątkowy gość, twierdzi, że listonosz mu powiedział że książka nie została wysłana, a potwierdzenie nadania które posiadamy go nieinteresuje.*  
*[A really exceptional guy, he claims that the postman told him the book hadn't been sent, while the postal receipt that we have does not interest him at all.]*

In this fragment of the seller's feedback, the underlined phrase is, at face value very polite and appreciative yet this is an indirect insult; the implicature expresses the exact opposite of these words.

Examples (16) and (17) are veiled insults formulated thanks to the pronoun *taki* (in singular or in plural), which modifies the noun *sprzedawca* or *sprzedawcy*:

- (16) Buyer: Takiego sprzedawcę radzę omijać szerokim łukiem. NIE POLECAM !!!!  
[Stay away from such a seller. NOT TO BE RECOMMENDED!!!]

The comment is also an accusation and a warning.

- (17) Buyer: Witam nikomu nie polecam tego sprzedawce. Brak jakiegokolwiek kontaktu pieniądze które przelałem na konto sprzedającego przepadły! a towar zamówiony wogóle nie dotarł. Bardzo wielki negatyw i oby jak najmniej było takich sprzedawców na ALLEGRO.  
[Hi I don't recommend this seller to anyone. No contact whatsoever, the money that I transferred onto his account is lost! The item ordered has not shown up. A huge minus and let there be as few sellers like that as possible on Allegro.]

(17) is a generalization, which does not include any openly derogatory terms. It carries the implicature: 'you are not worth doing business with, are dishonest etc.' but it is even more impolite because the buyer expresses his hope that the seller and the likes of him will not use the auctioning service.

Example (18) is a fragment of an already described altercation – a part of the seller's retort:

- (18) Uznajemy reklamacje [klient omyłkowo dostał 2x ten sam box] wysyłamy poprawny BOX a jemu wciąż coś nie pasuje. Jakie stare wydanie? Stare wydanie to masz swojego mózgu.  
[We accept the complaint [the client was sent the same box twice by mistake], then we send him the right box and he still picks holes. What old edition? Clearly you have an old edition of your brain.]

The 'victims' of this insult are: the brain of the buyer (too obsolete to grasp any novelties or the Allegro.pl policy), and of course, indirectly, the buyer, which enhances the impoliteness effect. Finally, it certainly helps to generate the complex implicature: 'since your brain is old-fashioned, you yourself are old-fashioned too, and also intellectually challenged.'

- (19) Seller: Klient dokonał wpłaty 7 dni po zakupie więc obarczanie sprzedawcy za to że przesyłka dotarła późno to wyjątkowa niegodziwość.  
[The client paid the money 7 days after the purchase, so blaming the seller for late shipment is an exceptionally vile thing to do.]

This insult is rather convoluted; instead of directly describing the buyer by using an adjective *niegodziwy* (wicked, vile) this buyer chooses nominalisation. This linguistic structure works well in conveying the implicature 'you bear ill will and bad intentions.'

In (20), the underlined part of a comment insults the buyer in yet another way:

(20) *Buyer: SKLEP PORAŻKA !!! Kompletny brak zainteresowania klientem po wpłacie pieniędzy. 14 stycznia kupiłam, 15 zapłaciłam- jest 31, szafki nie dotarły. Mimo telefonów, zwrotu pieniędzy nie otrzymałam. Wysyłka inną firmą niż w opisie aukcji.*  
*Seller: DROGA PANNO JAK MIESZKAMY TAM GDZIE PSY I DIABEŁ MÓWI DOBRANOC I BOCIANY ZAWRACAJĄ TO SORRRRRY ALE KURIER UPS W ODRÓŻNIENIU DO PANNNNY TO CZŁOWIEK Z KRWI I KOŚCI. NIE POLECAM CZARNA LISTA,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,,*  
*[Buyer: THIS SHOP IS A DISASTER!!! Total lack of interest in the client after he has paid the money. I bought the items on 14 Jan, paid on 15 Jan – today we have 31 Jan and still no sign of the cupboards. Despite making phonecalls I haven't got my money back. They ship the product using a different company from the one mentioned in the listing.*  
*Seller: Dear Miss, if we live at the back of beyond and in the last place God made, then oh well... Sorry, but contrary to you a UPS courier is a human being. I don't recommend black list]*

Here we are dealing with an interesting example of an indirect insult. The seller remarks that the buyer probably lives in a remote and unreachable place, or even an uncivilized or uncharted area. Thus by insulting the buyer's place of living the seller indirectly insults her as well. This is in line with Chen's (2001) understanding of 'self,' which includes also one's house or neighbourhood.

**2.4. Accuse other** (examples: I/1, II/1, XI/3, XIV/1a-b, XV/3, VII/1, VII/2, XVIII/1, XXI/1, XXI/3, XXI/4, XXI/5, XXII/2, XXII/6, XXIII/3, XXIV/2, XXIV/3, XXIV/5, XXIV/6, XXIV/7a-c, XXIV/10, XXVI/10, XXVII/1, XXVII/9, XXVII/10, XXVII/12, XXVIII/14, XXVIII/18, XXVIII/20, XXIX/1, XXIX/2, XXIX/3, XXIX/4, XXIX/5, XXIX/6a-b, XXIX/7, XXIX/9, XXIX/11, XXIX/12, XXIX/15, XXIX/17, XXIX/32, XXX/2, XXX/4, XXX/5, XXX/6a-d, XXX/14, XXX/16, XXX/18, XXX/21, XXX/22a-c, XXX/25, XXX/26, XXX/28, XXXI/1, XXXI/12, XXXI/19, XXXI/21, XXXII/1, XXXII/2, XXXII/4, XXXII/13, XXXII/17a-b, XXXII/21, XXXII/25, XXXII/26, XXXII/32d,g, XXXII/35, XXXII/36, XXXII/38, XXXII/42, XXXIII/2, XXXIII/3, XXXIII/4, XXXIII/5, XXXIII/6, XXXIII/8, XXXIII/10, XXXIII/16a-b, XXXIII/17, XXXIII/18, XXXIII/20, XXXIII/21, XXXIII/22, XXXIII/25, XXXIII/30, XXXIII/32, XXXIII/33, XXXIII/44, XXXIII/46, XXXIII/49a-b, XXXIII/51, XXXIII/54, XXXIII/61, XXXIII/63, XXXIII/64, XXXIII/65, XXXIII/67, XXXIV/2, XXXIV/3, XXXIV/7, XXXIV/9, XXXIV/10, XXXIV/12, XXXIV/18, XXXIV/19a-c, XXXIV/25, XXXIV/26, XXXIV/28, XXXIV/29, XXXIV/39, XXXIV/41, XXXIV/42, XXXIV/44, XXXIV/46, XXXIV/48, XXXIV/49, XXXIV/55, XXXIV/57, XXXIV/58, XXXIV/62, XXXIV/65, XXXIV/75, XXXIV/76, XXXIV/77, XXXIV/81, XXXIV/82, XXXIV/83, XXXIV/85, XXXIV/86, XXXIV/88, XXXIV/89, XXXIV/91, XXXIV/92, XXXIV/93, XXXIV/94, XXXIV/95, XXXIV/96, XXXIV/97, XXXIV/98, XXXIV/99, XXXIV/100, XXXIV/102, XXXIV/104, XXXIV/105, XXXIV/106, XXXIV/107, XXXIV/110, XXXIV/111, XXXIV/113, XXXIV/114, XXXIV/115, XXXIV/116, XXXIV/117, XXXIV/119, XXXIV/122, XXXIV/123, XXXIV/127, XXXIV/128, XXXIV/129, XXXIV/130, XXXIV/131, XXXIV/133, XXXIV/134, XXXIV/135, XXXIV/137, XXXIV/138, XXXIV/139, XXXIV/140, XXXIV/141c, XXXIV/155, XXXIV/158, XXXIV/159, XXXIV/162, XXXIV/165, XXXIV/168)



This strategy partly coincides with criticizing other, and there are countless examples of both the buyer and the sellers accusing their partners (both directly and indirectly). However, there are two interesting subtypes of accusations: the first refers to causing harm to third parties (and hence its name); the second one aims at revealing the opponent's true, dishonest intentions, criminal activity, serious offences etc.

**2.4.1. 'Hurting third parties'** (examples: XXII/3, XXIV/3, XXVI/4, XXVI/8, XXVI/10, XXVIII/12, XXIX/21, XXX/4, XXX/14, XXX/17, XXX/19, XXXI/6, XXXI/7, XXXIII/13, XXXIII/35, XXXIII/39, XXXIII/43, XXXIII/45, XXXIII/49a-b, XXXIV/155)

This subtype of accusation is always issued by the buyers. The sellers are accused of not only mishandling the transaction, but also of harming other innocent persons and entities: children who did not receive e.g. their Christmas gift, or received a toy that e.g. turned out to be broken, somebody who did not receive their birthday present because of the seller's negligence, or somebody who e.g. went to the seller's shop on the buyer's behalf and had to wait, found the shop closed, was badly treated by the seller etc. Another example of 'innocent beings that were hurt (indirectly) by the seller' is pets, which have not received their food, toys or accessories; in the most drastic cases, the pets are sick or even die. The implicature would read: 'you have harmed other innocent entities' and consequently, even 'you are cruel, heartless and soulless.'

(21) *Buyer: To są jakieś żarty...Sprzedający totalnie olewa klienta! Zero szacunku, telefony nie odpowiadają więc po co je Pan podawał? Wysłałem dziesiątki maili i nie otrzymałem ani jednej odpowiedzi! Przez tego palanta pies musi jeść Frolica!!!!!!*  
*[This is a joke.. The seller doesn't give a damn about the client! No respect, nobody picks up the phone so why did you give me your phone number? I sent dozens of emails and didn't get a single reply! Now, because of that jerk, my dog has to eat Frolic!!!!]*

In this comment, the most interesting part is the last sentence - an accusation which suggests that another entity has been affected by the seller's carelessness and unprofessionalism. The implicature is: 'you have made my dog suffer by eating the food it does not like (tolerate or is allergic to).' Interestingly there is a discrepancy between the ways the seller is addressed and referred to: initially, he is addressed by the Polish honorific *Pan* (Huszcza 1996 [2006]: 102-125), yet later he is referred to as *palant* (a jerk), which strengthens the impolite implicature.

In (22) and (23), the same seller is accused of such practices by two different buyers:

(22) *Buyer: Ryba nie zgodna z opisem i ze zdjęciem, trzymana w tragicznych warunkach, jest chora na ospę. Dlatego śmiesz opis, „Zastrzegam sobie prawo odwołania ofert jeśli stwierdże że kupujący nie jest w stanie zapewnić zwierzakowi odpowiednich warunków.*

*[The fish doesn't fit the description and the picture, it has been kept in disastrous conditions and has fish pox. That's why the description "I reserve the right to cancel offers of purchase if I decide that the buyer is unable to provide the pet with adequate conditions" comes across as utterly ridiculous.]*

In this instance, the client implies that the seller is the only person responsible for the disastrous condition of the fish and, possibly, maltreatment of the innocent animal.

(23) *Buyer: Sprzedawca nie miał wszystkich zakupionych przez mnie ryb. Na zwróconą uwagę, że ryby dziwnie się zachowują usłyszałem, że są OK. Podczas 20 min. transportu z 7 szt. dowiozłem tylko 5. Ciekawe czy będą kolejne straty?. Nie polecam.*

*[The seller didn't have all the fish I bought. When I pointed out their behaviour is strange, I heard they were fine. After 20 minutes of transporting them I managed to bring home five out of seven. Maybe there are more losses to come? I don't recommend.]*

This example strongly implicates that the neglect on the seller's part might have led to the death of two fish. This accusation is made even stronger because of a highly sarcastic and impolite rhetorical question, suggesting that in future, even fish might die.

The next two comments mention the disappointment two different sellers have supposedly caused to the buyers' children:

(24) *Buyer: Niestety obsługa zamówienia naganna, wybrałem przesyłkę kurierską towar został wysłany pocztą polską. Zakupione filmy miały być prezentem pod choinkę dla dziecka, do tej pory nie doszła przesyłka.*

*[Unfortunately, very poor service, I chose a courier and the item was sent via mail. The films I bought were meant to be a Christmas present for a child, and the goods still haven't arrived.]*

Here, the comment implicates that the victim of the seller's unprofessionalism is a child, let down because of not receiving his/her present. The seller is presented as a wrongdoer and indirectly (the impersonal *nie doszła przesyłka* instead of a more direct statement) accused of hurting the child.

(25) *Buyer: Brak gwarancji. Filtr otrzymałem używany w nieoryginalnym opakowaniu. Faktura została przysłana z opóźnieniem z błędami. Kupujcie u innych. Mogłem reklamować ale co powiedzieć dziecku, że nie otrzyma akwarium w dniu urodzin. NIESOLIDNI*

*[No warranty. The filter I received was used and not in original packaging. The invoice was sent with a delay and it contained mistakes. Buy from other sellers. I could have made a complaint but what can you say to a child? That they won't receive an aquarium for their birthday? UNRELIABLE]*

The implicated accusation is very similar to the previous one; it is conveyed by an open rhetorical question and obviously evokes a more dramatic, accusatory and moving effect.

**2.4.2. Disclose other's motives** (examples: I/1, II/1, VII/2, VIII/1, XIV/1a-b, XV/2, XIV/3, XXI/2, XXII/4a, XXIII/6, XXIII/8, XXIII/9, XXVI/8, XXVI/11, XXVI/14, XXVII/7, XXVII/12, XXVIII/5, XXVIII/16, XXX/11a-b, XXXI/19, XXXI/30a, XXXI/33,

XXXI/37a-b, XXXI/38, XXXII/4, XXXII/7, XXXII/12, XXXII/24, XXXII/29, XXXII/32g-l, XXXII/33a-b, XXXII/35, XXXIII/12, XXXIII/24, XXXIII/46, XXXIII/63, XXXIII/67, XXXIV/1, XXXIV/19a, XXXIV/68, XXXIV/118)

On some occasions, the Allegro.pl user is accused of having committed some illegal action, like using double identity (i.e. two usernames) and malevolent practices and various kinds to the audience (readers) and prospective business partners. Disclosing such information also serves as a warning; moreover, it might be considered as highly impolite and carrying serious consequences, like legal action, formal indictment, informing the Allegro.pl authorities etc.

In (26), the seller's reply is a good illustration of this strategy:

(26) *Buyer: Nie polecam - utrudniony kontakt mailowy - to już drugi zakup ale z jakości towaru jestem nie zadowolony - po kilku praniach zrobiła się szmatka. O wycofaniu oferty nie ma co marzyć.*

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: pon 27 lip 2009 21:08:34 CEST] Do dnia dzisiejszego nie zapłacił Pan za towar, zakupy nie zostały do Pana wysłane, leżą u nas na magazynowej półce (jak je Pan tam pierze? - nie wiem ....) Sprawa zgłoszona do allegro.*

*[Buyer: I don't recommend – mail contact was really problematic – this is my second purchase but I'm not happy with the quality of the product – turned into a rag after a few washes. Withdrawing the offer is out of the question.*

*Seller: You haven't paid for the product until this very day, it hasn't been sent to you, it's still sitting on a shelf in our stockroom (how you actually wash it there I have no idea). Case reported to Allegro.]*

In this humorous and sarcastic repartee, the seller simply narrates the events and ultimately reveals how scheming and duplicitous the buyer has been all along. Logically, the comment implicates: 'you are two-faced and malevolent.' The ridiculing effect is achieved thanks to the open rhetorical question as well.

Another comment by the seller reveals the buyer to be vengeful:

(27) *Buyer: Trzy tygodnie temu zrobiłem przelew i cisza. Sprzedawca nie odpisuje na żadne maile. Sprawę zgłosiłem administracji allegro a jeśli nie pomoże to powiadomię prokuraturę tym bardziej że innych kupujących w tym czasie spotkało to samo.*

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: śro 21 lip 2010 14:45:22 CEST] przesyłka została zagubiona przez pocztę, także niestety nie możemy ponosić odpowiedzialności za zaistniałą sytuację, wysłaliśmy do Pana ponowną wysyłkę, niewiem skąd ten wniosek że kupujących spotkało to samo, pozostali kupujący wystawili pozytywne*

*[Buyer: Three weeks ago I made a transfer and nothing. The seller doesn't reply to emails. The case has been reported to Allegro authorities and if that doesn't help, I'm going to go to court, especially given that other clients have had the same experience.*

*Seller: the item was lost in the mail so unfortunately we can't take responsibility for this situation, we sent you the item again, I don't know where this conclusion about others' experiences comes from, the rest of my clients have given me positive feedback]*

Here, the seller not only denies the buyer, but also manages to portray him as a liar.

Sometimes the buyer may really be a competitive company posting fake negative comments just to make the seller lose clients. If such motives are disclosed, this amounts to a very serious accusation of dishonesty and malpractice. Exchanges in (28) and (29) are a case in point:

- (28) *Buyer: Niestety ale nie profesjonalnie zabezpieczone sadzonki glistnika, a co za tym idzie wszystko dostałem zgnite i nie nadające się do niczego. WSZYSTKO DO KOSZA. Przykro mi ale NEGATYW*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: pią 27 sie 2010 13:21:20 CEST] Dzwoniłem ,wysłałem 3 e-maile z propozycją zwrotu pieniędzy lub ponownego wysłania -brak kontaktu,kupujący kupił tylko po to żeby wystawić negatywa,podejrzewam konkurencję!Rośliny były następnego dnia u adresata jak mogły zgnić*  
*[Buyer: Unfortunately the chelidonium cuttings were not secured professionally, so everything I received was rotten and generally useless. EVERYTHING HAD TO GO TO THE WASTEBASKET. I'm sorry - a NEGATIVE comment.*  
*Seller: I called, sent 3 emails offering a refund or sending the item again – no contact, the buyer made his purchase just to give me a negative comment, I suspect competition! The plants arrived at his place the following they so how could they have rotted?]*

The seller reveals the buyer's dishonest and vicious intentions via simply recounting the events, and ends his comment by an open rhetorical question, which additionally ridicules the buyer and makes his accusation sound even more absurd and irrational.

The next exchange shows the same mechanism, with the use of a different linguistic strategy:

- (29) *Buyer: towar niekompletny i uszkodzony*  
*Seller: [Negatywny, 27 mar 2009 09:35] NEGATYW -klient twierdzi ,że otrzymał towar niekompletny i uszkodzony, tylko dziwnym [dziwnym – A.W.] trafem nie powiadomił nas o tym, brak dowodów typu:zdjęcie uszkodzonego towaru , protokołu szkodowego spisanego w obecności kuriera.NIE POLECAM !!!*  
*[Buyer: the item was incomplete and damaged*  
*Seller: A negative comment – the client claims to have received an incomplete and damaged item, but somehow he didn't happen to notify us about it, no evidence like a photo of a damaged product, a damage report written in the courier's presence. I DON'T RECOMMEND]*

In this comment, the seller mildly implicates that the client's motives might be dishonest by being sarcastic (*dziwnym trafem*) and listing all the elements that are necessary to make any complaint sound reliable, well-documented and substantiated, and which the buyer's accusation does not include. A similar operation (listing the things that are necessary for a successful and reliable complaint) is observed below:

- (30) *Buyer: Totalnie zero kontaktu!! Bardzo nie miła Pani w rozmowie telefonicznej krzyczała na mnie ... ponad tydzień od zamówienia i zero paczki. ani kontaktu pani mi wmawia że nie dostała potwierdzenia zakupu.. takawa kopie posiadam do wglądu! Odradzam !!!!!*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:wto 22 wrz 2009 14:52:05 CEST] BESZCZELNE KŁAMSTWA! BRAK POTWIERDZENIA ZAKUPU TOWARU ORAZ WPLATY ZA TOWAR POMIMO PRZYPOMNIENIA DROGĄ MAILOWĄ .PO PRZYPOMNIENIU REZYGNUJE Z ZAKUPU INFORMUJAC NAS TEL. ZAGRYWKA TYPOWEGO OSZUSTA I NACIAGACZ NA KOSZTY ORAZ ZŁA OPINIE O FIRMIE*

*[Buyer: No contact at all. A very unpleasant lady screamed at me on the phone, a week has passed since placing the order and still no parcel and no contact. The lady tries to make me believe that she has no proof of purchase... whose copy I have, available on request! I advise you against doing business with that seller!]*

*Seller: Insolent lies! No proof of purchase or payment despite our reminders sent in emails. After receiving the reminder he gives up on the purchase and informs us about it on the phone. A typical con man's trick. An extortionist trying to damage the company's good name]*

Here, the last sentence is particularly accusatory and critical in implicating that the buyer is a con man and an extortionist.

The exchanges in (31) and (32) also disclose the buyer's deceitful actions:

- (31) *Buyer: Pompa nie ma takiej wydajności jak w opisie aukcji. Kontakt dobry, szybka wysyłka. Odesłałem pompe i przysłana nowa ma ta sama wadę. Szkoda kasy na ciągłe odsyłanie w kółko. Miał być neutral, ale sprzedający na neutralne odpowiada negatywnie, więc..*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: sob 06 cze 2009 13:22:01 CEST] Kupił w kwietniu 2008. Używał tą "niewydajną" pompę przez pół roku po czym stwierdził że ni by wydajność ma niższą! Wymieniłem na nową. W mailu napisał że ok! Po miesiącu ni by dalej stała "niewydajna". Miał odesłać. Brak mi słów*

*[Buyer: The pump is not as efficient as the description says. Good contact, fast shipment. I sent the pump back and the new one has exactly the same flaw. Sending it back again and again is a waste of money. I was going to issue a neutral comment, but the seller replies to neutral comments with negative ones, so ....]*

*Seller: He bought the product in 2008, used this 'inefficient' pump for half a year and then maintained it was less efficient. I replaced it. In the email he said it was OK! A month later it was still 'inefficient.' He was supposed to send it back. I'm at a loss for words]*

The obviously sarcastic reply presents the buyer as having a hidden agenda (that is, extortion and repeatedly making the seller replace the item); implicating: 'you are suspicious and cunning.'

- (32) *Buyer: Niestety NEGATYW, wysyłka owszem szybka, jednak okres ważności 18 kg karmy wynosił 6 m-cy. Próbowałem załatwić sprawę przed wystawieniem komentarza (wymiana produktu) ale zostałem delikatnie mówiąc zignorowany. NIE POLECAM.*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: pon 09 mar 2009 10:36:12 CET] Zakup 03.03.2009 karma z datą ważności 21.09.2009r !!! Kolejna już próba wyłudzenia części pieniędzy zastaniając się iż piesek nie zjadł przed terminem spożycia !!! Zalecam zastanowić się nad sobą Bardzo Poważnie !!!*

*[Buyer: Unfortunately a negative comment, quick shipment I must say, but the dog food's shelf life was 6 months. I tried to resolve the problem before posting a comment (by having the product replaced) but to put it mildly, I was ignored. I DON'T RECOMMEND.*

*Seller: The date of the purchase - 3 March 2009, the dog food's expiry date - 21 Sep 2009!!! Yet another attempt at extortion with the excuse that the doggie won't manage to eat it up before the sell-by date! I suggest a Really Great Deal Of Soul-Searching!]*

The retort implicates three things about the buyer: that he had been pressuring the seller to refund him or replace the product in the past, that he had resorted to extortion before (which,

again, is quite a serious accusation and a highly risky impolite act) and, finally, that his lies are all too conspicuous.

**2.5. Ridicule other** (examples: VII/2, X/1, X/3, XIV/2, XIV/3, XV/3, XVIII/1, XVIII/4, XXI/1, XXI/3, XXII/1, XXII/3, XXII/4a, XXII/6, XXIII/6, XXIV/4, XXIV/7a-c, XXIV/9, XXVII/2, XXVII/3, XXVII/6a, XXVII/8, XXVII/14d, XXVIII/3, XXVIII/4, XXVIII/9, XXVIII/10, XXVIII/12, XXVIII/19, XXVIII/22, XXVIII/23, XXIX/3, XXIX/4, XXIX/5, XXIX/10, XXIX/11, XXIX/14, XXIX/15, XXIX/17, XXIX/18, XXIX/19, XXIX/23, XXIX/24, XXIX/25, XXX/1, XXX/3, XXX/15, XXX/16, XXX/24, XXX/25, XXX/33, XXXI/23a, XXXII/1, XXXII/3, XXXII/18, XXXII/20a, XXXII/34, XXXII/40, XXXII/42, XXXIII/1, XXXIII/10, XXXIII/15, XXXIII/27, XXXIII/28, XXXIII/30, XXXIII/48, XXXIII/62, XXXIII/64, XXXIII/66, XXXIII/68, XXXIV/9, XXXIV/14, XXXIV/36, XXXIV/37, XXXIV/50, XXXIV/51, XXXIV/52, XXXIV/53, XXXIV/56, XXXIV/57, XXXIV/74, XXXIV/88, XXXIV/90, XXXIV/91, XXXIV/101, XXXIV/103, XXXIV/116, XXXIV/126, XXXIV/135, XXXIV/163)

This strategy (Culpeper 1996: 358, Bousfield 2008: 114-118), popular with both sellers and buyers, often involves sarcasm. It aims to present the adversary in a negative light (as not serious, stupid or narrow-minded). The opponent is at times addressed and referred to like a child (and sometimes not a very bright one), hence the use of diminutives. The more subtle and indirect the ridicule is, the more vicious the overall impoliteness becomes. A good example can be seen in (33):

- (33) *Buyer: nie polecam!nie wspomniano że pasek trzeba złożyc samemu Klamra do paska okazała się za mała i literki nie pasują! i nie chcę wymienić na inną, tania chińska tandeta ,zero kontaktu ,nie odbierają telefonów , i nie odp na meile ,zgłaszam!*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:śro 16 gru 2009 18:46:48 CET] Możesz sobie zgłosić zajączkowi wielkanocnemu nawet. Myślisz, że wszyscy tu siedzą i tylko czekają na maila, żeby szantażem szybko odpisać w ciągu paru godzin, bo jak nie to negatyw? Puknij się człowieku, najlepiej czymś ciężkim.*  
*[Buyer: I don't recommend! It was not mentioned that you have to assemble the belt by yourself, the buckle turned out too small and the letters don't fit. The seller doesn't want to replace it, cheap Chinese tacky product, no contact, they don't reply to emails, I am reporting them.*  
*Seller: You can even report it to Easter Bunny. Do you think that we all just sit here and wait for your email blackmailing us into replying quickly within the next few hours, because otherwise we will get negative feedback? Go to a shrink, man.]*

The seller's response mockingly evokes the imaginary character of Easter Bunny, an imaginary character traditionally associated with children's beliefs. In this way, the seller makes the buyer (who warns her that he will make a formal complaint and notify the Allegro management) sound puerile. The implicature to be derived from this retort is: 'you are not serious, you are insane' etc.

The next ridiculing comment is also produced by a seller:

- (34) *Buyer: Nie polecam - utrudniony kontakt mailowy - to już drugi zakup ale z jakości towaru jestem nie zadowolony - po kilku praniach zrobiła się szmatka. O wycofaniu oferty nie ma co*

marzyć.

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:pon 27 lip 2009 21:08:34 CEST] Do dnia dzisiejszego nie zapłacił Pan za towar, zakupy nie zostały do Pana wysłane, leżą u nas na magazynowej półce (jak je Pan tam pierze? - nie wiem ....) Sprawa zgłoszona do allegro.*

*[Buyer: I don't recommend – mail contact was really problematic – this is my second purchase but I'm not happy with the quality of the product – turned into a rag after a few washes.*

*Withdrawing the offer is out of the question.*

*Seller: You haven't paid for the product until this very day, it hasn't been sent to you, it's still lying on a shelf in our stockroom (how you actually wash it there I have no idea). Case reported to Allegro.]*

The response involves a rhetorical question and is obviously quite sarcastic; moreover, it also reveals the buyer's unfair and dishonest practices (another interpretation is that the buyer is simply absent-minded). The overall intended meaning is: 'you are cunning, scheming and dishonest and should be ashamed of yourself' or 'you are absent minded and therefore not to be treated seriously.'

In the last two instances, the seller compares the buyer to a child:

(35) *Seller: [Odpowiedź z:pią 12 gru 2008 12:16:53 CET] Przypomniało się dziecku [po –A.W.] pół roku że nie otrzymało paczki? Śmiech na sali, tym bardziej że firma dysponuje KAŻDYM DOWODEM WYSYŁKI W KSIĄŻCE NADAWCZEJ.*

*[So, the child has remembered that he didn't get the parcel six months later? Utterly ridiculous, especially given that our company has every certificate of posting in its 'mail sent' book.]*

The buyer is addressed as 'child' (in the third person, which is even more indirect) and the rhetorical question further boosts the impolite effect. The common Polish expression *śmiech na sali* (literally: laughter in the room, fig. 'that is ridiculous' – A.W.) is also helpful in drawing the implicature: you are pathetic, childish, not worth talking to.'

(36) *Buyer: 20 stycznia wpłaciłam na pana kątó pieniądze.dziś jest 4 luty.a zakupionego towaru nadal nie otrzymałam!!!*

*Seller [Odpowiedź z:śro 10 lut 2010 23:38:59 CET]: Dziecko trochę pospieszyło się z nagatywem, przysyłkę otrzymało i jest szczęśliwe.*

*[Buyer: On 20 January I transferred my money onto your account. Today it's 4 February and I still haven't got the product I bought!*

*Seller: The child was a bit too quick in posting a negative comment, she got the parcel and is happy now.]*

Here, the seller indirectly addresses the opponent in third person; the ridiculing implicature would read: 'since you are childish, your needs are childish as well and it is easy to please you and make you happy, just like a child.'

## 2.6. Degrade other (examples: XXX/6d, XXXII/33c, XXXIV/60)

First, a line should be drawn between degrading and ridiculing. Degrading other would be much stronger than ridiculing, i.e. using expressions which are particularly humiliating and demeaning. Such feedback involves, for instance, comparing the opponent to an object, or an animal which is not highly thought of in Polish culture, indicating the opponent's supposed low intelligence, etc. Ridiculing, in contrast, is rather associated with comparing the adversary to a child and therefore is considered less offensive. In (37), the buyer is degraded:

(37) Seller: [Odpowiedź z:wto 30 gru 2008 09:58:39 CET] Tłumaczmy jak pastusz [pastuch –A.W.] krowie - a krowa nadal nie rozumie nic. Szkoda czasu na takich oszołomow - a zagadką pozostaje jak mamy sie skontaktowac z kupujacym ktory podaje nieprawidlowy nr tel a porozumiec sie droga via @ graniczy z cudem.

[We keep spelling it out to him and he still can't make head or tail of it. Talking to such jerks is a waste of time and it still remains a mystery how we are supposed to get hold of a buyer who gives us the wrong phone number, while contact via email is practically a miracle.]

Here, the seller paraphrases a common Polish saying *tłumaczyć (coś) jak chłop krowie na miedzy*, translatable as *to explain something to somebody like a peasant does to a cow on a baulk*, or figuratively, *to spell something out to somebody*. This comparison is considered quite offensive and demeaning in the Polish culture, because it implicates that the addressee (indirectly referred to as the cow) is dim-witted and slow-thinking.

(38) Seller: *Widzicie Państwo - czasami się trafi na TABORET, obiektywnie z mojej strony nie było niedociągnięcia - transakcja kilkuzłotowa! - natomiast z kupującymi za kilkaset złotych nigdy nie ma takich problemów! - mówi samo za siebie.*

[Well, you see, Ladies and Gentlemen - sometimes you come across a DUMMY, objectively speaking, there was no fault of mine – a transaction involving a few zlotys! – while there are no such problems with buyers who spend a few hundred zlotys! – that speaks for itself.]

Here, the seller is likened to a stool (another offensive and demeaning expression in Polish, implying low intelligence, stubbornness or uncooperativeness). The comment itself is a paraphrase of the common Polish saying *są ludzie i taborety* (there are people and (then) there are stools), which suggests that some human beings (here, the buyer) are too simple, unintelligent or annoying to cooperate with.

In (39), the seller is downgraded by his client:

(39) Buyer: *aparat miał być wysłany 1,5 tygodnia temu tak było zapewnione, na ponowne zapytanie o wysyłce brak odpowiedzi (licytacja była bez ceny minimalnej pewnie cena mu nie pasowała) nie polecam tego sprzedawcyka...*

[The camera was supposed to be sent 1.5 weeks ago, so I was assured, another question about the shipment with no reply (the bid had no minimal price, apparently he didn't like the final price) I don't recommend this so-called seller...]



By referring to the seller as *sprzedawczyk* (a Polish diminutive used ironically) instead of *sprzedawca*, the buyer manages to humiliate his opponent and convey an implicature: ‘you are not to be treated seriously.’

**2.7. Patronize other** (examples: V/1, VII/1, XII/2, XIV/2, XVII/1, XVII/2a-c, XVIII/1, XVIII/4, XXI/1, XXI/5, XXII/2, XXII/3, XXII/4a, XXII/6, XXIII/6, XXIV/4, XXIV/7a-c, XXIV/8, XXVI/1, XXVI/5, XXVI/6, XXVI/7, XXVII/2, XXVII/3, XXVII/4, XXVII/5, XXVII/6a, XXVII/8, XXVII/11, XXVII/13, XXVII/14d, XXVIII/3, XXVIII/4, XXVIII/9, XXVIII/10, XXVIII/12, XXVIII/18, XXVIII/19, XXVIII/22, XXVIII/23, XXIX/2, XXIX/5, XXIX/7, XXIX/9, XXIX/12, XXIX/13, XXIX/14, XXIX/15, XXIX/16, XXIX/17, XXIX/18, XXIX/19, XXIX/20, XXIX/22, XXIX/25, XXIX/26, XXIX/27, XXIX/28, XXIX/30, XXIX/31, XXIX/34, XXIX/35, XXX/1, XXX/2, XXX/5, XXX/6a, XXX/15, XXX/25, XXX/26, XXX/28, XXXI/4, XXXI/5, XXXI/12, XXXI/15, XXXI/19, XXXI/20, XXXI/21, XXXI/25, XXXI/30b, XXXI/34, XXXI/36, XXXI/37a, XXXI/39, XXXI/41, XXXII/1, XXXII/3, XXXII/10, XXXII/16, XXXII/18, XXXII/23, XXXII/25, XXXII/26, XXXII/27a, XXXII/28, XXXII/32e, XXXII/34, XXXII/40, XXXII/42, XXXIII/3, XXXIII/5, XXXIII/15, XXXIII/21, XXXIII/23, XXXIII/25, XXXIII/28, XXXIII/30, XXXIII/35, XXXIII/36a-b, XXXIII/40, XXXIII/48, XXXIII/51, XXXIII/52, XXXIII/62, XXXIII/64, XXXIII/68, XXXIV/4, XXXIV/5, XXXIV/7, XXXIV/10, XXXIV/11, XXXIV/16, XXXIV/17, XXXIV/20, XXXIV/23, XXXIV/26, XXXIV/30, XXXIV/36, XXXIV/51, XXXIV/57, XXXIV/69, XXXIV/77, XXXIV/88, XXXIV/90, XXXIV/91, XXXIV/101, XXXIV/107, XXXIV/126, XXXIV/151, XXXIV/152)

This strategy occurs whenever the author of the comment shows superiority and instructs their opponent to embrace or accept different facts and truths (at times, very obvious), assuming a lecturing tone. Quite often patronizing combines with sarcasm and wit. The implicature here is: ‘you are immature, ignorant, uninformed, not educated enough, etc.’ This response by a seller shows a patronizing and sarcastic attitude:

(40) *Seller: Wiesz co to jest 'reklamacja'? Tzn. że zgłaszasz problem i dostajesz zwrot kasy Miło że się nie skontaktowałeś przed wystawieniem komentarza. Thanx.*  
*[Do you know what 'a complaint' is? It means that you inform me about your problem and you get your dough back. Nice of you not to have contacted me before posting your comment. Thanx.]*

In (41), the seller literally suggests that the buyer study the rules of buying and selling:

(41) *Seller: Człowiek zacofany , z epoki kamienia łupanego mało komunikatywny. Radzę pobrać kilka lekcji na temat postępu w dziedzinie prawa handlowego , a dokładnie znaczenie słowa "REKLAMACJA" Pozdrawiam i zapraszam Kinga-55*  
*[A person who is behind the times, mentally still in the Stone Age, hardly communicative. It would be advisable to take a few lessons in the progress in trade law, specifically in the meaning of the term 'COMPLAINT' I am sending my regards and inviting you Kinga-55 (the seller's username – A.W.)]*

In (42), a seller quotes the listing of his action in order to reproach and patronize a fussy client:

- (42) *Seller: DROGA KLIENTKO NA AUKCJI WYRAZNIE JEST NAPISANE ZE TRZEBA ZAKUPIC MIN 10SZT I WTEDY JEST POKRYWANY KOSZT PRZESYLKI, ZASADA NA ALLEGRO JEST TAKA ZE TRZEBA DOKŁADNIE CZYTAC A NIE LICYTOWAC, JEZELI COS BYLO NIEZROZUMIALE MOZNA BYLO ZADAC PYTANIE PRZED!!*

*[Dear Client, the auction listing says precisely that you have to buy at least 10 items to get the shipment costs refunded, the Allegro rule states you have to read carefully instead of bidding, if something was unclear you could have asked a question before!]*

The implicature projected by this feedback is ‘you are childish and you need to be instructed.’

In (43), the client is told to shop wisely:

- (43) *Seller: Niewiarygodna klientka, brak jakiegokolwiek kontaktu mailowego i tel., do końca nie jest przekonana co tak naprawdę chce. Na przyszłość polecam o rozsądne i przemyślane zakupy !!! Transakcja nie doszła do skutku*

*[An incredible client, no contact at all via email or telephone, not convinced what she really wants. In future I recommend wise and well-planned shopping!!! Transaction was not finalized.]*

The patronizing effect is reinforced by the opening phrase: *na przyszłość* (in the future), which is common in instructions and advice.

The comment in (44) also contains obvious advice which should be common knowledge to every Allegro.pl user:

- (44) *Buyer: nie otrzymałem towaru*

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: śro 25 mar 2009 10:35:55 CET] KLIENCIE - zweryfikuj w obecności kuriera stan zabezpieczenia przesyłki oraz jej kompletności zgodności z zamówieniem oraz czy nie nastąpiło uszkodzenie mechaniczne przyjęcie przesyłki bez zastrzeżeń jest równoznaczne z akceptacją*

*[Buyer: I haven't received the product*

*Seller: CLIENT – please make sure, in the courier's presence, that your parcel has been securely packaged and that its contents fit your order and check the parcel for possible damage - taking the product with no objections equals accepting it]*

The author's attitude could be seen as superior, and the implicature could be: ‘you are immature, you should know better than that.’

By and large it is the sellers who display a patronizing attitude, yet sometimes the buyers also patronize the sellers, e.g.:

- (45) *Bardzo mi przykro ale nie miałem innego wyjścia.. paczka przyszła no ale po paru tygodniach ?!.. niech Pani zmieni meila skoro NIBY nie dochodzą wiadomości... polecam nie kłamać na przyszłość.. Dopiero po rozm.tel. na drugi dzień zostało wysłane*

*[I'm sorry but I had no other choice.. the product did arrive but only after a few weeks.. please change your email address if you allegedly receive no messages.. I recommend not lying in future.. only after a phone conversation was the item sent, on the following day.]*

The buyer sounds superior by giving advice and presenting a moral truth, as if he were a parent reproaching a child. He implicates that the seller is not to be trusted.

**2.8. Challenge other** (examples: XXXII/30, XXXII/34, XXIX/4, XXVIII/2, XXXIV/27, XXXIV/50, XXXIV/67, XXXIV/86, XXXIV/93, XXXIV/107, XXXIV/115)

In the face of a wrongly conducted transaction, an unjust accusation or an insult, an Allegro.pl user may also challenge their opponent to undertake various actions, most commonly to issue a negative comment as revenge, inform the Allegro authorities, the police, the court etc. Both Lachenicht (1981: 668-671) and Bousfield (2008: 132-134) regard challenging other as an effective impoliteness strategy. In the data set, the implicatures of challenging comments could be: 'bring it on, I am not afraid' or 'you bear ill will.' Since the user decides on such a comment, they assume that their opponent has bad intentions in the first place, which obviously is an expression of impolite beliefs. Therefore, the overall implicature would read: 'go on, do it - I know you will do it, because you are malevolent.' One such example is presented in (46):

(46) *Buyer: Wystąpił o zwrot prowizji a dzień później otrzymał email z dowodem wpłaty, mimo to nie odstąpił od prowizji. Teraz ma monety, prowizję i pieniądze. Brak wyrozumiałości mimo wielu wspólnych udanych transakcji. Czekam na negatywy od Pana.*  
[He asked to have the fee returned, one day later he got an email with the paying-in slip and yet he has not given up on the fee. Now he has the coins, the fee and the money. No understanding despite many transactions we have conducted together. And now, I am waiting for your negative feedback.]

In this comment, a buyer states that s/he is waiting for the seller's next move, i.e. a negative comment. The implicature that could be derived is: 'be my guest, I am not afraid' on a lower level, but on a higher level it is implied that since the seller will certainly issue negative feedback, as he is full of ill will.

Another type of challenge is combined with insulting or degrading; the opponent is dared to face the truth about his low intellect, as in (47):

(47) *Buyer: Ciota nie sprzedawca! Nic nie dostałem od 2tyg i jeszcze mi negatywa wystawia. Żal patrzeć na takich ludzi :) eh... żalotne ;] absolutnie nie polecam!*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:sob 23 sie 2008 09:34:09 CEST] Dwukrotnie awizowana a on o niczym nie wiedział. Popatrz się na siebie -dopiero żal ci dupe ściśnie.*  
[Buyer: A sissy, not a seller! I haven't received anything for 2 weeks and he posts a negative comment. It's painful to look at such people... well, pathetic. Not to be recommended at all.  
Seller: It was advised twice and yet he didn't know about it. You should look at yourself – that will be a true pain in the ass.]

The underlined sentence contains a very vulgar and rude Polish saying, which implicates that something or somebody is pathetic. Consequently, the implicature of this feedback could be: 'you are stupid, hopeless and simply pathetic.'

- (48) *Buyer: Pieniadze doszły 19 do dziś nie doczekałam się książki... za tydzień nie będę już jej potrzebowała ..Ciekawe czy Ihanja ją odemnie odkupi??!! Zastanawiam się dlaczego ta księgarnia jeszcze prowadzi jakąś działalność na stronach Allegro*  
*[The money arrived on the 19th and I haven't received the book yet.. a week from today I am not going to need it.. I wonder if Ihanja (the seller's username –A.W.) will buy it back from me?I also wonder why this bookshop is still doing business via Allegro]*

Here, the challenge is different: the seller is sarcastically offered to buy back a book she allegedly could not ship on time. The intended meaning would be 'you are so unprofessional that you cannot deliver a book on time.'

- (49) *Buyer: Przez 3 tygodnie 0 kontaktu tel,ograniczony @,mimo wpłaty złotych nie otrzymałem towaru. Ciekawe co napiszesz w odpowiedzi?*  
*[No telephone contact for 3 weeks, limited email contact, despite paying the money I haven't got my product. Well, what are going to write in reply?]*

In this comment, the buyer challenges the seller to produce an answer ('go on, think up some excuse!') and logically defends him/herself after the (possible and predictable) attack. The ironic undertone (obtained via a rhetorical question) is that the buyer believes there is nothing the seller can say in her/his defence. This implicature reads: 'there is nothing you can say, no way can you defend yourself, your behaviour is so unprofessional that it is inexcusable.'

**2.9. Warn against other** (examples: XXII/1, XV/2, XXIV/2, XXIX/6a, XXIX/13, XXX/24, XXX/30, XXX/11a-b, XXXI/18, XXXI/11, XXXI/19, XXXII/17b, XXXII/20a, XXXII/38, XXXIII/20, XXXIII/33, XXXIII/41, XXXIII/46, XXXIV/31, XXXIV/41, XXXIII/57, XXXIV/80, XXXIV/117)

This strategy is frequently used both by the buyers and by the sellers; the data collection abounds in both direct and indirect warnings; the latter are presumably more offensive and use a wide variety of devices. This strategy coincides with insulting, accusing (disclosing other's motives) or criticizing. Usually, comments of this kind implicate: 'do not do business with this person, do not trust them' and portray the partner not only as unreliable, but also as potentially dishonest or even dangerous.

Examples (50) and (51) show that an indirect warning might take the form of giving advice:

- (50) *Buyer: Takiego sprzedawcę radzę omijać szerokim łukiem. NIE POLECAM !!!*  
*[Stay as far away as possible from such a buyer - I DON'T RECOMMEND]*

This fragment of a comment directly advises to avoid the seller but indirectly warns against him; the use of the pronoun *takiego* (such) suggests that the seller's professionalism leaves a lot to be desired.

(51) Seller: [Odpowiedź z:śro 19 lip 2006 16:55:14 CEST] Radze usuwac jego oferty, natura histeryczna i niepewna, mozna dostac negatywa za nic, ale cóż sa osoby ktorym nic sie nie spodoba i które nie uszanują wcześniejszych ustalen!  
 [I advise you to remove his bidding offers, hysterical and uncertain, you can get negative feedback for nothing, but well, there are people who are always picking holes and who don't respect earlier agreements]

Here, the underlined part is a warning also expressed via advice. In fact, the whole comment might serve as a warning thanks to a critical description and a general truth *sa osoby ... (there are people..)*

In many cases, the warning tone could be inferred from the long description of the partner's behaviour or attitude. Then even without the direct statement *nie polecam* (very common in negative feedback) the overall implicature is negative and discouraging anyway:

(52) Seller: Jak widać po komentarzu oraz karcie użytkownika, jest on najprawdopodobniej NIEPOCZYTALNY UMYSŁOWO. Osoba taka NIE POWINNA MIEĆ DOSTĘPU do serwisu. Dane i nr tel. są FIKCYJNE. Wpłaty nie było. Negatyw NIE ZASŁUŻONY.  
 [As you can see from the comment and the profile, he most probably is deranged. Such people should not have access to the service. The data and the phone number are fictional. No payment was made. The negative feedback was undeserved.]

This insulting description in the first sentence presents the buyer as not mentally fit to use Allegro.pl, so the implicature could read: 'do not do business with him.'

The last two comments show similar mechanisms of warning against the opponent:

(53) Seller: Bezczelny typ z tej klientki- odsyła zniszczoną biżuterię w zupełnie innym opakowaniu z dopiskiem "Kolia nie była używana, ani kolczyki" Historia jej transakcji na allegro mówi sama za siebie- NEGATYW, NEGATYW  
 [This client is one cheeky girl – she sends back jewellery in a different packaging, saying that neither the necklace nor the earrings have been used.' Her transaction history speaks for itself. A negative comment, a negative comment]

Here, the underlined statement warns against any transactions with her by alluding to her past (probably) wrong behaviour.

(54) Seller: Nie polecam i odradzam. Nie wpłaca pieniędzy tygodniami, dopiero po punkcje karnym mu się przypomina.  
 [I don't recommend him and I advise you against doing business with him. He doesn't pay for weeks, he only remembers when he's given a penalty point.]

The second part of this comment, a description of the buyer's scandalous behaviour, could be read as an indirect warning, and which implicates: 'do not trust him, he is dishonest.'

**2.10. Threaten other** (examples: XXIII/3, XXVIII/9, XXX/21, XXXII/42, XXXIV/107, XXXIV/116, XXXIV/19a)

Negative comments also convey indirect threats which refer to revenge (i.e. replying with negative comment), damaging the opponent's reputation and business, legal action or simply causing some complications, like below:

- (55) *Buyer: Towar niesprawny. Towar po 2 tygodniach. Przesyłka nadpłacona - płaciłem priorytet. Brak gwarancji. Brak PARAGONU. NIE POLECAM. NIKOMU. DOŚĆ WYROZUMIAŁOŚCI. PRZEGIĄŁ PAN. Zapraszam na negatywa w moją stronę a odpłacę sie pięknie*  
[The product doesn't work. Received after 2 weeks. Too much paid for shipment – I paid for priority. No warranty. No receipt. I don't recommend. To anyone. No more understanding. You are out of bounds. I invite you to give me negative feedback and I will retaliate brilliantly]

The threat (the client promises that he will retaliate) combines with strategies 'use sarcasm' and 'challenge other.' The assumption is that the seller will post negative feedback, so bad intentions are attributed to him. The intended meaning here would be 'you bear ill will.'

- (56) *Buyer: Nie profesjonalne podejście. Chcę zwrot pieniędzy za zakupiony towar!!!! Wielki oszust! Zdziwi się, jak będzie jak pewnego dnia przyjdzie list ze Sądu!! Brak kontaktu, ani towaru, za którego zapłaciłam. Nie polecam!*  
[No professionalism. I want my money back for what I bought! A great con man! He will be shocked when he receives court papers one day! No contact, no goods I paid for. I don't recommend!]

In this comment, the client implicates that the seller's behaviour was so contemptible that she indirectly promises to take the matter to court and thus retaliate. The intended meaning derived here could read: 'you deserve nothing more than legal action.'

- (57) *Buyer: Ten sprzedawca to człowiek nieuczciwy i zdemoralizowany. Takich ludzi powinno się wyeliminować nie tylko z Allegro, ale i ze społeczeństwa. Posiadam zarchiwizowaną całą korespondencję i zainteresowanym mogę przedstawić jego łajdactwo.*  
[This seller is dishonest and immoral. Such people should be eliminated not only from Allegro, but also from society. I have stored all our correspondence and can prove his vile actions to anyone who is interested.]

In this feedback, the buyer threatens to incriminate and destroy the seller by presenting, at somebody's request, the evidence of his supposed wrongdoings. This particular threat is even more impolite and offensive than the two remaining ones, as it invites third parties (not the court or Allegro.pl authorities but, possibly, other Allegro.pl users) to undermine the seller.

### 3. Rhetorical devices

This section lists strategies that appear in the data according to the rhetorical devices that are being used there. The strategies that have been identified are: self-politeness as impoliteness, divided into several substrategies that realize self-politeness in various ways, repetition or paraphrasing of what the opponent has said (or written), sarcasm, asking rhetorical questions, questioning the other's reputation; the last strategy to be presented here is the 'no-comment strategy,' i.e. various instances of flouting Grice's Quantity Maxim.

**3.1. Self-politeness as impoliteness** (examples: II/1, III/1, XIV/a-b, XV/1, XV/4, XVII/1, XVII/2a-c, XVIII/2, XVIII/4, XVIII/5, XXI/5, XXI/6, XXII/5, XXIV/8, XXIV/9, XXVI/1, XXVI/14, XXVII/3, XXVII/4, XXVII/5, XXVII/10, XXVII/13, XXVII/14d, XXVIII/5, XXVIII/6, XXVIII/7, XXVIII/8, XXVIII/15, XXVIII/16, XXVIII/17, XXVIII/20, XXIX/1, XXIX/7, XXIX/9, XXIX/10, XXIX/21, XXIX/22, XXIX/26, XXIX/34, XXX/1, XXX/4, XXX/5, XXX/7, XXX/10, XXX/14, XXX/15, XXX/17, XXX/19, XXX/23, XXX/29, XXX/31, XXX/32, XXX/33, XXXI/7, XXXI/8, XXXI/14, XXXI/15, XXXI/18, XXXI/22, XXXI/24, XXXI/28, XXXI/30a, XXXI/34, XXXII/3, XXXII/6, XXXII/7, XXXII/9a-b, XXXII/12, XXXII/14, XXXII/17a-b, XXXII/19, XXXII/27a,c, XXXII/28, XXXII/39a-b, XXXIII/2, XXXIII/3, XXXIII/6, XXXIII/9, XXXIII/12, XXXIII/13, XXXIII/18, XXXIII/22, XXXIII/32, XXXIII/35, XXXIII/37, XXXIII/42, XXXIII/43, XXXIII/46, XXXIII/47, XXXIII/49a-b, XXXIII/57, XXXIII/58, XXXIV/6, XXXIV/9, XXXIV/11, XXXIV/22, XXXIV/23, XXXIV/26, XXXIV/28, XXXIV/29, XXXIV/35, XXXIV/36, XXXIV/38, XXXIV/42, XXXIV/49, XXXIV/55, XXXIV/63, XXXIV/67, XXXIV/69, XXXIV/81, XXXIV/93, XXXIV/102, XXXIV/104, XXXIV/109, XXXIV/111, XXXIV/112, XXXIV/146)

Self-politeness, introduced by Chen (2001), is an attempt to locate one's own 'self' within Brown and Levinson's model of politeness. The author states that our own face (or, in his terms, our self-face) is omitted and neglected in Brown and Levinson's politeness model (1987), which, he argues, overestimates the status and role of the hearer and ignores the point of view of the speaker (Chen 2001: 90-92). He postulates that his framework be viewed as a supplement or extension of Brown and Levinson's model. What he defines as 'self' in his coined term 'self-face' is not just the speaker's image, dignity and reputation, but everything connected or associated with them: "[their] family, friends, colleagues, clients, and even [their]<sup>27</sup> profession" (Chen 2001: 88). As he explains:

"The spokesperson of the White House will say things that maintain the image of the US government, hence the self in this case is the corporate entity of the White House. When I debate with a colleague from the field of psychology regarding, say, whether language acquisition is more of a territory of linguistics or psychology, my self will be the fields of linguistics as much as my opponent's self is the field of psychology" (ibid.).

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<sup>27</sup> Chen (2001) uses the pronoun 'her,' not 'their.'

It is easy to imagine ‘self’ encompassing also our house and home, possessions, social status, language, nationality, culture and so on. For Chen, self-face is as vulnerable and exposed to possible face threats as is the other’s face; attempts at defending, protecting and enhancing self-face qualify as self-politeness. This short conversation illustrates a case in point:

(58) *A and B are both Americans; A is looking for a house and finds one he wants to buy; before making a decision, he asks B (a neighbour, female) some questions about the neighbourhood:*  
*A: Is this a relatively safe area? I mean break-ins and all that.*  
*B: Well.. as safe as it can be nowadays. There have been some activities here and there, but people watch for each other’s homes and things aren’t that bad (Chen 2001: 89).*

Here, the term ‘self’ has obviously been extended to accommodate B’s neighbourhood and place of living. A’s question, though apparently polite (indirect and hedged by *I mean...*), could nevertheless be read as a mild threat to B’s self-face. A appears to question the safety and tranquillity of this particular place. This offends an important rule of American culture, which states that the safety of one’s neighbourhood should never be criticized in conventionally polite conversations, as one’s place of living indicates one’s social position. B manages to defend her self-face; her evasive answer uses the euphemism ‘activities’ in order to avoid any associations with the area possibly being dangerous. As the author puts it, B’s answer is "motivated by her need to minimize the threat to her self-face that seems inherent in the speech act she has to perform" (Chen 2001: 89). B defends her self-face also by flouting the Gricean Maxim of Quality and Manner, as she provides an intentionally complicated and convoluted response, whose implicature might be: ‘you should not criticize my place of living; it is slightly inappropriate.’

The Allegro.pl altercations abound in instances of self-politeness as well, only here the terms ‘self-politeness’ and ‘self’ manifest themselves in a distinctive way. The scope of ‘self’ can be extended to the products and services sold by Allegro sellers, so that “my self” perfectly accommodates “my goods” and of course “my reputation, opinion, credibility and good name as a seller.” It could be argued that this facet of ‘self’ could form part of the professional face as well.

As Wiechecka (2010a, 2012) argues, self-politeness may well be coupled with impoliteness, and such co-occurrences are numerous in my data corpus.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, there exists a proportionate relationship between the degree of self-politeness and the degree of impoliteness: ‘the more self-polite I am, the more impolite I am to you at the same time.’

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<sup>28</sup> These observations tie up with Leech’s findings on the asymmetrical nature of politeness (1983: 107): "what is polite with respect to *h* or to some third party will be impolite with respect to *s*, and vice versa."



The Allegro sellers show their self-politeness by defending their goods, their quality, durability, authenticity etc., which makes me believe that the strategy employed may be called 'defend the goods you are selling.' The overall aim of those descriptions is, obviously, 'defend yourself.' The more the sellers defend themselves, the more degraded the buyers will be.

The seller's replies may therefore try to show the goods in a positive light, as in (59):

(59) *Buyer: ZDECYDOWALEM WYSTAWIC NEGATYWA. BO SPOSOB ZALATWIENIA SPRAWY, DO DZIS NIEMA ZAKONCZENIA. Owszem towar otrzymałem, ale nie dokona [zgodny –A.W.] z opisem instrukcja obsługi nie od tego modelu a sterowniki nie nadają się do instalacji. Kontakt nie możliwy NIE POLECAM*

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: pią 06 lip 2007 16:39:20 CEST] Towar był jak najbardziej zgodny z opisem. Płyta ze sterownikami to oryginalna płyta Panasonic do tego aparatu więc zarzut jest bezpodstawny. Poza tym klient miał możliwość zwrotu towaru i z tej opcji nie skorzystał.*

*[Buyer: I decided to post a negative comment because the transaction was conducted in such a way that there is still no ending. I did receive the product but it is not what the description says, the instruction manual – not from this model, the drivers can't be installed. Contact – impossible I don't recommend*

*Seller: The product did match the description. The CD with the drivers is the original Panasonic CD especially for this camera, so this accusation is groundless. Besides, the client could have always returned the product and didn't use this opportunity.]*

In this exchange, the buyer accuses the seller of having sold an item which turned out to be different from its description, and of sending him an inadequate installation package. In his reply, the seller defends the item's genuineness, which helps to boost self-politeness.

The altercation in (60) displays a similar mechanism:

(60) *Buyer: Jestem nie zadowolony z wykonania szawki, najgorsza jest listwa wykończeniowa profilowana. NIE POLESAM.*

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: śro 14 sty 2009 17:33:42 CET]: Totalne bzdury! Towar od RENOMOWANEGO PRODUCENTA w dziedzinie akwarystyki DIVERSA. SUPER JAKOŚĆ W BARDZO NISKIEJ CENIE. Jeżeli nie masz pojęcia na ten temat NIE LICYTUJ!!!*

*[Buyer: I'm not happy with the way the cupboard is made, the worst part is the picture rail. I don't recommend.*

*Seller: Total rubbish! The product comes from a renowned manufacturer in fishkeeping - DIVERSA. If you don't know anything about it, don't bid!!!]*

The seller defends the goods, and thus strengthens his self-politeness, by adducing the trademark associated with expertise and experience and by mentioning their attractive price.

In the following example, the item is described as damaged; in its defence, the seller negates and ridicules the client:

(61) *Buyer: Kupiłem przedmiot przedmiot jest uszkodzony, a teraz nie mogłem się porozumieć ze sprzedającym.*

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: pią 12 mar 2010 15:10:29 CET] Towar jest w pełni sprawny tylko Klient chce podłączyć do transmitera urządzenie, które nie jest z nim kompatybilne*

*[Buyer: I bought an item the item is broken and now I haven't been able to reach the seller*

*Seller: The item works just fine but the client wants to connect some incompatible equipment to the trasmitter]*

The seller not only manages to save his self-face, but also to poke fun at the buyer by implicating: ‘I sell good quality items, you are too stupid to use it properly.’

Sometimes the items are described as low quality and the seller’s honesty is questioned, as in (62):

- (62) *Buyer: Moneta nie nadaje się do wystawiania na aukcji. Nieczytelna .Kiepski złom.Dlatego komentarz w 100% negatywny.Nie polecam tego Pana do zawierania transakcji.*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:pią 09 paź 2009 18:35:17 CEST] Otrzymał Pan monete dokładnie ze zdjęcia - wszystkie jej wady były bardzo dobrze widoczne a zdjęcie było zamieszczone w opisie aukcji, licytacja była od 1 zł, każdy widział co kupuje, stąd niska cena.*  
*[Buyer: The coin is not fit for being put up for auction. Illegible. Tacky junk. As a result, feedback 100% negative. I don’t recommend doing transactions with this gentleman.*  
*Seller: You received exactly the same coin as the one in the picture – all its flaws were really visible and the photo was a part of the listing, the bidding started from 1 zł, everyone could see what they were buying, hence the low price.]*

Here, the seller predictably defends the item and proves his truthfulness, justifying its low price. Interestingly, he does not try to prove the good quality of the item but rather its genuineness to show himself as honest and, via implicature, portray his client as choosy and hard to please.

The next example shows a similar mechanism:

- (63) *Buyer: Sygnet WYKONANY Z BARDZO SLABEGO MATERIAŁU!!!!!!! Zrobilem głęboka ryse DŁUGOPISEM na lekcji!! Pozatym Aby wymienić na inny rozmiar muszę dopłacić!!!! Czuje sie wielce oszukany!!!! NIE\_POLECAM!!*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:czw 18 gru 2008 19:12:27 CET] Po próbie rysa mi wyszła od noża. Jak się porysował to chyba jaja jakieś, że od długopisu. Żeby wymienić na inny rozmiar trzeba odesłać na swój koszt. Kolejny raz jaja se Pan robi sądząc że to moja wina, że Pan nie zna rozmiaru.*  
*[Buyer: The statement ring was made of poor material and I made a scratch on it with a pen during my lesson! Besides, I need to pay for having it exchanged for a different size! I feel utterly deceived! I don’t recommend!*  
*Seller: When I tested the ring, I managed to scratch it with a knife. Scratching it with a pen, now that must be a joke. To have it exchanged for a different one, you need to pay the shipment cost. You must be joking again by thinking it’s my fault that you don’t know the size.]*

Here, the buyer indirectly accuses the seller of selling faulty goods; by stating that the ring could be easily damaged, he implicates that its quality is poor. In response, the seller denies everything and defends her goods. The implicature here is: ‘my goods are decent, and you are obviously lying.’

- (64) *Buyer: Absolutnie nie polecam zamawiania od tej osoby:filter dojechał prawie po 4tygodniach jakby w używanym pudełku, bez dwóch podstawowych części, kobieta odbierająca telefon tłumaczy sie nawalnica zamowien!!SKANDAL, szkoda że sa tacy allegrowicze*

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: czw 05 cze 2008 22:16:47 CEST] Towar wysyłamy NOWY, KOMPLETNY NIGDY NIE UŻYWANY!!! PRZED WYSYŁKĄ DOKŁADNIE SPRAWDZONY Klient wpłacił pieniądze po 4 tygodniach i nie wiem do kogo ma pretensje. Radzę dokładnie obejrzeć filter a nie oczerniać! Szkoda, że tacy istnieją*  
*[Buyer: I don't recommend ordering from this person at all: the filter arrived after 4 weeks in a box which seemed used, with two parts missing, the woman answering the phone makes excuses about being snowed under with orders! It's a scandal and a shame that such Allegro users exist.*  
*Seller: Product sent. New, complete, never used. The client paid for it after 4 weeks and I don't know who he's blaming for it. I advise you to double check the filter carefully and not to badmouth! It's a shame such people exist]*

Again, the underlined fragment of this example criticises the items sold and the assumed / alleged unprofessionalism of the seller. The reply is self-polite: in the part underlined, the seller defends the high quality of the goods, their authenticity and her professionalism.

### **3.1.1. Quote the number of positive comments you have already gained** (examples: XXVI/4, XXX/22a-c, XXXII/8, XXXIV/1)

It is generally known amongst Allegro.pl users that an online seller's reputation resides mainly in the number (or percentage) of positive comments scored throughout his career and might be treated as his / her showpiece and pride. Consequently, here 'my positive feedback' becomes also an important part of 'my self' as a component of 'my good reputation' (Chen 2001). Negative comments from Allegro buyers are viewed as the ultimate measure that should be avoided at all cost (instead, mediation and resolving the conflict e.g. via refunding the client is preferable); even neutral comments are unwelcome and frowned upon, especially by those sellers who support themselves from online auctions. By following this strategy, the seller automatically denies and contradicts the buyer, which is in itself impolite:

(65) *Buyer: Bardzo nie profesjonalny alegrowicz. Potrzebowałem przedmiot na urodziny dlatego zależało mi na rzetelnym kontakcie, niestety trwał on około 2 dni, i byłem zmuszony do rezygnacji z zakupu, Delikwent dzwoni wielce urazony, był chamski i amatorski. ODRADZAM*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: śro 05 gru 2007 20:14:36 CET] SZCZYT CHAMSTWA! Dzisiaj kupuję, jutro rezygnuję, w e-mailach zwraca się do kontrahenta na "ty", a kiedy zwracasz mu na to uwagę rzuca negatywem. A o moim amatorstwie i profesjonalizmie świadczą te 1000 pozytywów!*  
*[Buyer: A very unprofessional Allegro user. I needed the item for a birthday so I really wanted to keep in touch with the seller, unfortunately it lasted about 2 days and I was forced to give up on the purchase, then the guy calls, offended, and was rude and amateurish. I advise against doing business with him*  
*Seller: That's beyond rude! One day he buys, next day he gives up, addresses the seller as 'you' instead of 'Sir' and when you point it out to him, he replies with negative feedback. And the proof of my amateur skills and professionalism can be found in the 1000 positive comments I got!]*

In his reply, the high number of positive comments is presented in an ironic, sarcastic and subversive context. What is more, the seller is in the winning position because the amount of positive feedback can be checked at any moment by whoever is interested, and treated as evidence.

**3.1.2. Remind the other about your good reputation** (examples: VII/1, XI/2, XXIII/8, XXIV/1, XXIV/2, XXVII/14a, XXIX/22, XXX/3, XXX/21, XXX/22a, XXXI/5, XXXI/15, XXXI/28, XXXI/34, XXXII/19, XXXIII/1, XXXIII/15, XXXIV/19a)

This substrategy is similar to the previous one; the sellers defend their good name, or self-face, by reminding their adversary (and, for that matter, any third party who may read their profile) that they are professional, experienced and trustworthy. They contradict their opponents, all the while saving their professional face, as can be seen in (66) and (67):

- (66) *Buyer: Negatyw przez duże N.Firma nie uczciwa-do dziś nie dostałem wszystkich obiecanych gratisów ,paragonu zakupu ani co gorsze nie został mi wymieniony wadliwy żarnik.Kontakt z firmą zerowy -nie odbierają ani meili ani tel.i naciągają na koszty.*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:wto 24 mar 2009 16:30:34 CET] Nasza firma jest za uczciwa dla takich matolów jak kroslan8, towar dostał kompletny z opisem aukcji z gwarancją oraz paragonem. Wadliwy, nieużywany towar podlega wymianie , używany prze kupującego podlega reklamacji .ZAPRASZAM NA MOJE AUKCJE*  
*[Seller: My comment is negative with a capital N. A dishonest company – I still haven't received all the free bonuses, the receipt; worse still, the faulty incandescent light bulb hasn't been replaced. The contact with the company is non-existent – they don't read emails or answer phones and rip you off.*  
*Buyer: Our company is far too honest for morons like kroslan8 (the buyer's username – A.W.), he got the complete item along with the auction's listing, warranty and receipt. Faulty unused goods are replaced, if they haven't been used, a complaint can be filed. I invite [everyone] to my auctions]*

Here the seller highlights her honesty, implicating that the buyer is too challenged intellectually to fully appreciate it and thus does not deserve her services.

- (67) *Buyer: Samo skontaktowanie się było trudne, gdy już się udało i tak nic z tego nie wynikło... Negatyw za brak choćby wyjaśnienia że transakcja nie może być zrealizowana.*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:pią 16 wrz 2005 01:42:06 CEST] W ciągu ponad 200 aukcji nie miałem takiego klienta. Kontakt z nim był natychmiastowy. Nie chciał on ponieść kosztów transportu akwarium kurierem do Wrocławia. Chciał dostać akwarium listem poleconym nadanym na pocztę!:) Nie dokonał wpłaty!*  
*[Buyer: It was hard to get in touch with them, when I finally managed, it produced no good results...*  
*Seller: I have conducted 200 auctions and never have I met such a client. He got in touch right away. He didn't want to pay for having the aquarium shipped to Wrocław by a courier. He wanted to get it via a registered letter issued at the post office! He didn't pay!]*

Mentioning positive feedback enhances self-politeness and the positive image of the seller and, obviously, impoliteness to other as well.

In (68), the seller shows self-politeness by adducing a figure:

- (68) *Buyer: Nie polecam. Brak kontaktu /tel.nie ma takiego numeru 4 maile /przez 2 tyg.po otrzymaniu towaru.Akwarim o poj 54 l , a nie 60l gr szyby 4 mm a nie 5 mm ,zamiast filtra Hailea filtr Weipro ,zamiast grzałki 100W ,grzałka 50 W max do 40 l Oszust*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:nie 16 wrz 2007 20:37:50 CEST] Sprzedaliśmy ponad 100 takich zestawów na allegro i nikt nie zgłaszał pretensji co do pojemności i grubości szkła akwarium. Jeżeli klient jest niezadowolony z towaru to ma prawo do zwrotu. Pan jowisz61 jeszcze nie skorzystał z tego prawa.*  
*[Buyer: I don't recommend them. No contact (the telephone number they gave me does not exist), 4 emails within 2 weeks after getting the product. The aquarium has the volume of 54 litres, not 60 litres, the panes are 4 mm thick (and not 5 mm), the filter is a Weipro one instead of a Hailea one, a 50W (good for a 40-litre aquarium) heater instead of a 100W one. Con man*  
*Seller: We have sold over 100 such sets on Allegro and no one has ever complained about their volume and the thickness of its walls. If the client is unhappy with the product, they can always return it. Mister Jowisz61 (the buyer's username – A.W.) has not used this right yet.]*

Here, the seller quotes the number of similar items sold, which the reader can always verify by accessing the buyer's Allegro.pl profile. Consequently, she manages to show herself as experienced, and thus professional enough not to commit a mistake like the one described by the client, and thus contradicts the buyer. The overall implicature is therefore impolite.

Some sellers' comments may contain a mixture of self-polite strategies, like (69) and (70):

- (69) *Każda płyta jest oryginalna o czym świadczą nasze komentarze*  
*[Every CD is original, which is proven by the comments we receive]*  
(70) *Wszystkie sprzedawane produkty są nowe w folii z gwarancją o czym świadczą dziesiątki tysięcy pozytywów*  
*[All the products we sell are new and unused, with a warranty, which is proven by dozens of thousands of positive comments]*

Both these comments combine two substrategies: 'quote your good reputation/experience' or 'quote the number of your positive comments' and 'defend your goods.' The next example is a more elaborate combination of those two:

- (71) *Buyer: Nie jestem zadowolony z tego sklepu.Poniewarz robiąc unich zakupy przysłali mi spaloną grzałkę.Po zareklamowaniu jej musiałem im odesłać spowrotem na własny koszt ,gdzie jeszcze czekałem na przesyłkę około2tyg*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:pon 19 paź 2009 09:12:18 CEST] Wysyłamy towar nowy i przed wysyłką sprawdzany Radzę zapoznać się z regulaminem oraz procedurą rozpatrywania reklamacji nie z naszej winy.Dlaczego za niewiedzę klienta firma kinga-55 jest oczerniana!?*  
*[Buyer: I am not happy with this shop because they sent me a burnt heater. Then after complaining about it I had to send it back to them at my cost and to wait for my product for about 2 weeks*  
*Seller: We send new products and always check them before shipment. I advise you to become acquainted with the rules and procedures of dealing with complaints when we are not at fault. Why is kinga-55 (the company's name - A.W.) being badmouthed for a client's ignorance?]*

Here, the seller is also self-polite via defending both her goods' high quality and her good reputation. She also stresses the injustice done to her by this comment, thus portraying herself as honest and innocent, and the buyer as ignorant and not serious enough to do business with.

Example (72) is also an interesting mixture of multiple self-polite tactics:

- (72) *Buyer: KOLCZYK KTORY KUPILAM OD WAS TO SZAJŚ NIE POLECAM!!!!!!*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:sob 05 gru 2009 22:00:25 CET] Cóż, nie każdemu dogodzi nawet rewelacyjnym towarem w super cenie. Zawsze się trafi klient super wybredny. Nadmienię, że pozostałe setki klientów są co najmniej zadowoleni i dokupują inne modele.*  
*[Buyer: The earring I bought from you is trash I don't recommend!]*  
*Seller: Oh well, you just can't please everybody, can you, even when you sell excellent products at very attractive prices. There always has to be a picky client. Let me add that the remaining hundreds of my clients are at least happy and they buy more models from my store.]*

Here, the seller is self-polite in a number of ways: she praises her goods as superb, the price as highly attractive, hints at the number of her satisfied clients and finally mentions the shop's high popularity, good reputation and top quality service. At the same time, the buyer is indirectly portrayed as fussy and high-maintenance.

**3.1.3. Quote your shop's terms and conditions** (examples: I/1, XII/3, XIV/3, XXIII/5, XXIV/4, XXVII/3, XXVIII/11, XXVIII/22, XXIX/9, XXXI/21, XXXI/26b, XXXI/37a-b, XXXI/40, XXXIII/27, XXXIII/23, XXXIII/27, XXXIII/35, XXXIII/52, XXXIII/66, XXXIV/32, XXXIV/47, XXXIV/68, XXXIV/72, XXXIV/74, XXXIV/77, XXXIV/90, XXXIV/108)

This is another effective way in which the sellers defend themselves: they copy and paste from their personal Allegro profile the rules by which the buyers should abide in doing business with them. Those include: methods and deadlines regarding payments, issuing complaints, returning the goods, settling disputes, handling conflicts etc. It is desirable that the buyers read these rules first before deciding on a transaction (often this truth is repeated as a reproach in the replies). At this point, it could be concluded that 'my rules, terms and conditions' also automatically become an integral part of 'my self', as it is the sellers who create and post them on their profiles (although these rules are more or less general and common to many sellers). This strategy is also meant to ridicule the buyer or present them as malicious, naïve, illiterate or simply absent-minded, e.g.:

- (73) *Buyer: UWAGA!!! NIE POLECAM!!!! Sprzedawca podaje sprzeczne informacje dotyczące kosztów przesyłki wprowadzających w błąd nabywcę co narusza podstawowe zasady regulaminu obowiązujące tzw. "SUPER Sprzedawce"*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:czw 19 cze 2008 16:11:13 CEST] DROGA KLIENTKO NA AUKCJI WYRAZNIE JEST NAPISANE ZE TRZEBA ZAKUPIC MIN 10SZT I WTEDY JEST POKRYWANY KOSZT PRZESYŁKI, ZASADA NA ALLEGRO JEST TAKA ZE TRZEBA DOKŁADNIE CZYTAC*

*A NIE LICYTOWAC, JEZELI COS BYLO NIEZROZUMIALE MOZNA BYLO ZADAC PYTANIE PRZED!!]*

*[Buyer: Attention! I don't recommend! The seller gives you contradictory information about shipment costs that mislead the buyer, which breaches the key rules of being a 'SuperSeller.'*

*Seller: Dear Client, it is spelled out in the action listing that shipment costs are returned when you buy at least 10 products. The general Allegro rule says you should read everything carefully instead of bidding right away; if something was unclear it could have been asked about earlier!!]*

In this exchange, the seller is accused of being ambiguous and misleading, and of breaching important rules. The seller, in response, quotes the very listing of the auction and ridicules the buyer, presenting him as careless or childish. Also, general rule ('read before buying') is adduced to make the remark sound even more patronizing and ridiculing.

**3.2. Repeat or paraphrase what the other has said** (examples: V/2, XXII/6, XXIII/6, XXIII/8, XXVII/13, XXVIII/9, XXVIII/13a, XXIX/2, XXIX/4, XXIX/23, XXIX/30, XXIX/31, XXIX/33, XXX/7, XXX/9, XXX/10, XXX/26, XXX/29, XXXI/15, XXXI/22, XXXII/21, XXXII/22, XXXIV/24, XXXII/27b, XXXIII/22, XXXIV/4, XXXIV/22, XXXIV/115, XXXIV/125)

Many authors (Holmes 1984: 355, Bousfield 2008: 174-175, Cutting 2002: 13) argue that a repetition of a word, phrase, or sentence is a very powerful impoliteness marker and enhancer. In terms of rhetoric, its effectiveness stems from the common belief that when repeated, a piece of text is better remembered. However, these authors focus on repetition within a piece of text/discourse produced by just one participant. It could be claimed that repeating the words of one's adversary can also be seen as impolite, since the very same words can be used to degrade the opponent or deny them. Even a very small modification, like adding an exclamation mark or a question mark at the end of the repeated sequence, can change the tone and convey impolite beliefs. In the data, repetitions appear across turns: a sequence is originally written by the buyer and then lifted by the seller (and put in a totally different context) with the objective to convey impolite beliefs even more effectively.

Sometimes the repeated fragment is left untouched, which strengthens the counter-accusation and the impolite 'the-joke-is-on-you' effect. Example (74), involving simply a repetition of one noun, is a good illustration:

(74) *Buyer [27 sty 2008 19:26:36 CET] Zamówiłem bransoletkę i nie została nawet ona do mnie wysłana. Wysłałem maila potwierdzającego transakcję i nawet nie dostałem odpowiedzi.*

*Żenada*

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: czw 31 sty 2008 09:52:58 CET] Nie ma żadnego maila, jeśli Pan faktycznie wysłał to poszedł w eter. W takich sytuacjach wysyła się jeszcze raz z potwierdzeniem odbioru lub dzwoni. Faktycznie, żenada.*

*[Buyer: I ordered a bracelet and it wasn't even sent to me. I sent an email confirming the transaction and I didn't even get a reply. Disgrace.*

*Seller: There is no email, if you have really sent it then it must have been lost. In such cases one should send another email with a confirmation or call us. You're right, a disgrace.]*

The repeated element might also be a clause, like in the example below; again, we can observe a strong impolite effect. The next three exchanges show that a repetition of a clause and then putting it in a completely different context makes the accusation ‘backfire’ so that the impolite implicature is turned against the buyer:

- (75) *Buyer: Miesiąc pertraktacji nie wywarł skutku. Osoba sprzedająca powinna znaleźć się pod „lupa”, władz Allegro, a niewykluczone że i prokuratury-patrz, produkowanie kopii monet.*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:pią 28 lip 2006 11:36:39 CEST] Pewnie że nie wywarł skutku bo nie wysła towaru do póki nie dostane za niego pieniędzy*  
*[Buyer: A month of negotiation has brought no results. The seller should be watched closely by Allegro authorities, or possibly by prosecution too – cf. making copies of the coins.*  
*Seeller: Of course it has brought no results because I am not sending products till I get the money]*
- (76) *Buyer: Towaru nie było na stanie(czekanie ok.1,5 tyg),inna firma kurierska niż było podane na stronie(dostawa wieczorna niemożliwa!!)Przynajmniej był kontakt z allegrowiczem.Transakcja nie doszła do skutku.Szkoda.*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:czw 08 lis 2007 20:28:41 CET] Wielka szkoda że transakcja nie doszła do skutku bowiem wysłaliśmy towar w regulaminowym czasie a klientowi nie chciało się jej odebrać! Ponieśliśmy tylko koszty!*  
*[Buyer: The product was out of stock (waiting for 1.5 weeks), the courier company different than the one mentioned in the listing (no evening delivery possible!!) At least there was some contact with the Allegro user. The transaction wasn't finalized. Shame.*  
*Seller: It's a crying shame that the transaction wasn't finalized, because we sent the product at the scheduled time and the buyer didn't even bother to collect it! We just had to pay for it all!]*

In the last example, the word *szkoda* (*shame*) is modified, so that the impolite effect is stronger and ‘the joke-is-on-you effect’ works against the buyer.

In the next short exchange, the client paraphrases her own previous words and then the fragment paraphrased is repeated by the seller to make her remark sound even more offensive:

- (77) *Buyer: zero kontaktu... towar nie zgadza się ze zdjęciem.. brak jakiegokolwiek kontaktu...*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:pon 01 mar 2010 08:55:48 CET] Zgadzam się, nie było jakiegokolwiek kontaktu, trzeba było napisać - wymienilibyśmy na dłuższą.*  
*[Buyer: No contact.. the item doesn't match the picture..no contact at all..*  
*Seller: You're right, there was indeed no contact at all, you should have written to us and we could have replaced it with a longer one.]*

In the seller's reply, the repetition is modified; the verbless non-finite clause *brak kontaktu* is replaced with a past finite form *nie było [kontaktu]*. What is more, the seller seemingly agrees with the buyer at the beginning of her comment, just to aggravate the conflict and negate the buyer later. This subversive behaviour also boosts the overall impoliteness.

A similar procedure is seen in (78):

- (78) *Buyer [czw 15 kwi 2010 20:29:28 CEST] Głupie tłumaczenie, że płyta wypadła z zaczepów, a u dystrybutora nie ma na stanie. Niepoważne traktowanie Kupującego. Nie Polecam - Odradzam*



*Zakup U tego Sprzedającego. Dla przykładu proszę sobie zobaczyć Sprzedającego. Bez Komentarza*

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: czw 15 kwi 2010 20:39:30 CEST] Zupełnie niepoważnie to kupujący traktuje nas - sprzedającego. Nikczemny i bezpodstawny komentarz, szkoda, że niektórzy nie potrafią zrozumieć zdarzeń losowych; często niezależnych od nas.*

*[Buyer: Stupid explanations that the CD had come out of its hinges and it's out of stock. Very irresponsible treatment of the buyer. I don't recommend - I discourage you from buying here. See the seller, for example. No comment.*

*Seller: It is the buyer that treats us in a totally irresponsible way. A vile and groundless comment; what a shame some people can't understand fortuitous events, independent of us.]*

In this exchange, the fragment repeated is again slightly modified to enhance the rudeness effect: the client originally uses a noun phrase *niepoważne traktowanie* with the noun phrase *Kupującego*, indirectly pointing at him/herself. This phrase is then lifted by the seller, transformed into a finite clause, and extended: a direct object *nas* with the explanation *sprzedającego* is added, as is the modifier *zupełnie*. Interestingly, the response imitates the style of the accusation, which can be seen as mocking the buyer.

*(79) Buyer: Absolutnie nie polecam zamawiania od tej osoby:filter dojechał prawie po 4tygodniach jakby w używanym pudełku, bez dwóch podstawowych części, kobieta odbierająca telefon tłumaczy się nawalnica zamówień!!SKANDAL, szkoda że są tacy allegrowicze*

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: czw 05 cze 2008 22:16:47 CEST] Towar wysyłamy NOWY, KOMPLETNY NIGDY NIE UŻYWANY!!! PRZED WYSYŁKĄ DOKŁADNIE SPRAWDZONY Klient wpłacił pieniądze po 4 tygodniach i nie wiem do kogo ma pretensje. Radzę dokładnie obejrzeć filter a nie oczerniać! Szkoda, że tacy istnieją*

*[Buyer: I don't recommend ordering from this person at all: the filter arrived after 4 weeks in a box which seemed used, with two parts missing, the woman answering the phone makes excuses about being snowed under with orders! It's a scandal and a shame that such Allegro users exist. Seller: Product sent. New, complete, never used. The client paid for it after 4 weeks and I don't know who he's blaming for it. I advise you to double check the filter carefully and not to badmouth! It's a shame such people exist]*

Here, we also have a paraphrase of the client's words with the use of a synonym (*są* vs. *istnieją*). The omission of the collective noun *Allegrowicze* leaves the phrase consisting just of the head word: the demonstrative pronoun *tacy*, which in Polish is considered impolite when used without a noun (e.g. *przychodzi taka i się rządzi*, literally translatable into English as *there comes such and rules*, suggesting that a woman comes and starts to boss everybody around, which is negatively viewed).

In (80), the fragment that was lifted from the buyer's comment is then repeated again and extended. As a result, the buyer is hoist with their own petard: the impoliteness effect he had intended to hurt the seller with works against him:

*(80) Buyer: Pragnę ostrzec przed nieuczciwością sprzedającego. Za mało miejsca aby opisać te szopki. Kupując nowe wyd Gwiezdnych Wojen otrzymałem stare. Najpierw dwa razy pierwsze 3 części. Potem cz4,5,6 stare wyd. Warte 130zł. Tu za nie zapłaciłem 260zł. Seller: [Odpowiedź z: wto 06 sty 2009 08:58:52 CET] UWAGA OSZOŁOM! Taka etykieta*

*powinien miec na czole 24h/dobe. Uznajemy reklamacje [klient omyłkowo dostał 2x ten sam box] wysyłamy poprawny BOX a jemu wciąż coś nie pasuje. Jakie stare wydanie? Stare wydanie to masz swojego mózgu*

*[Buyer: I wish to warn you against the seller's dishonesty. Too little space to describe this travesty. I was buying a new edition of Star Wars I got an old one. First – the first 3 parts, twice. Then parts 4,5,6 – an old edition worth 130 zł. Here, I paid 260 zł for that.*

*Seller: We accept the complaint [the client was sent the same box twice by mistake], then we send him the right box and he still picks holes. What old edition? Clearly you have an old edition of your brain.]*

The noun phrase *stare wydanie* is repeated twice: first as a short rhetorical question (which additionally enhances the comment's impoliteness) and then as part of a clause (*Stare wydanie to masz swojego mózgu*). Naturally, this also enhances impoliteness and indirectly shows the buyer as intellectually incapable or challenged, or perhaps too old-fashioned to grasp the mechanics of online retail.

(81) *Buyer: Brak odpowiedzi mailowej na wysłane przezemnie zdjęcia towaru i złożoną reklamację!*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: śro 07 sty 2009 07:53:39 CET] Brak odp. ponieważ Firma była na urlopie do 6-01-09.*

*[Buyer: No reply to my email in which I sent my pictures of the product and my complaint!*

*Seller: No reply, because the company's management was on holiday until 6 Jan 2009.]*

Here, the repetition is also enriched with a subordinate clause which explains the reason for the supposed lack of contact. Presumably the seller had included this information on his/her profile, therefore the buyer is portrayed as slightly immature, hot-tempered and fussy (because they had not looked up this information before buying).

Such mimicking the buyer's style is observable in another online argument:

(82) *Buyer: obiektywnie: 1.Mało dokładny stempel (płytki) 2.Moneta wcale nie jest precyzyjnie wybita-jest jajcowata od 26,4mm do 27 mm i ma niedobite rowki na brzegu. 3.jej stan oceniam na III z lekkim+ wierna kopia z III-stanu??? smiechu warte.*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: pią 29 gru 2006 20:41:26 CET] teraz fakty: 1 moneta ta w oryginale była bita płytkim, nieostrym stemplem 2 moneta nie jest bita -w opisie jest wyraźnie że to odlew 3 dostał Pan monete w stanie dokładnie takim jak na zdjęciu poza tym istniała możliwość wymiany ale nie było kontaktu*

*[Buyer: Objectively: 1. a not very legible stamp (of the plate) 2. The coin is not minted in a precise fashion – egg-shaped from 26.4 mm to 27 mm and its grooves on the edge are not fully minted. 3. I would grade it as good with a plus; a faithful copy graded as 'good'? Ridiculous.*

*Seller: And now, the facts: 1. This coin was originally minted with a shallow and not very sharp stamp 2. The coin isn't minted – the listing says clearly it's a cast 3. You received a coin in the state presented in the picture, besides, there was a possibility of having it replaced but there was no contact]*

Here, repetition in the seller's reply is combined with contradiction. In fact, the whole structure of the accusation is mirrored in the reply: the seller enumerates and contradicts every criticism produced by the buyer, trying to prove him false. The implicature conveyed

here is ‘you are unavailable and therefore uncooperative.’ Interestingly, the sequence is introduced with the words *teraz fakty*, which additionally signals that the buyer is lying.

**3.3. Sarcasm** (examples: V/1, XV/2, XV/3, XVIII/1, XVIII/3, XVIII/4, XXI/1, XXI/2, XXII/1, XXII/3, XXII/4b, XXIII/1, XXIII/5, XXIII/6, XXIV/1, XXVI/3, XXIV/4, XXVI/4, XXVI/7, XXVI/9, XXVI/10, XXVI/11, XXVI/12, XXVII/1, XXVII/2, XXVII/3, XXVIII/6a, XXVIII/8, XXVIII/11, XXVIII/a,c,d, XXVIII/1, XXVIII/7, XXVIII/10, XXVIII/12, XXVIII/21, XXIX/1, XXIX/3, XXIX/5, XXIX/13, XXIX/14, XXIX/15, XXIX/18, XXIX/19, XXIX/22, XXIX/23, XXIX/24, XXIX/25, XXIX/27, XXIX/35, XXX/6b-d, XXX/16, XXX/18, XXX/20, XXX/22a, XXX/27, XXX/28, XXX/33, XXXI/2, XXXI/3, XXXI/4, XXXI/7, XXXI/12, XXXI/17, XXXI/20, XXXI/26a, XXXI/27, XXXI/29, XXXI/31, XXXI/36, XXXII/2, XXXII/9b, XXXII/10, XXXII/11a-c, XXXII/13, XXXII/16, XXXII/27a-c, XXXII/30, XXXII/32c, XXXII/27a, XXXII/38, XXXII/40, XXXII/42, XXXII/42, XXXIII/3, XXXIII/6, XXXIII/8, XXXIII/31, XXXIII/34, XXXIII/40, XXXIII/41, XXXIII/48, XXXIII/59, XXXIII/61, XXXIII/62, XXXIII/64, XXXIV/2, XXXIV/8, XXXIV/9, XXXIV/14, XXXIV/21, XXXIV/27, XXXIV/41, XXXIV/44, XXXIV/51, XXXIV/52, XXXIV/53, XXXIV/57, XXXIV/63, XXXIV/64, XXXIV/66, XXXIV/68, XXXIV/69, XXXIV/70, XXXIV/74, XXXIV/75, XXXIV/78, XXXIV/79, XXXIV/86, XXXIV/87, XXXIV/89, XXXIV/95, XXXIV/98, XXXIV/101, XXXIV/103, XXXIV/105, XXXIV/115, XXXIV/119, XXXIV/144, XXXIV/149, XXXIV/150, XXXIV/151, XXXIV/157, XXXIV/159, XXXIV/161, XXXIV/163)

My understanding of sarcasm is close to that suggested in Bousfield (2008: 118-122), i.e. wit, intentionally malicious, tongue-in-cheek or superficially polite. Bousfield argues that sarcasm may indeed go hand in hand with impoliteness and work as an impoliteness booster. In the Allegro.pl exchanges, sarcasm is applied by both the sellers and the buyers. The clients use it to portray the sellers as unserious and unprofessional, the sellers do so to defend their good reputation and credibility, as well as showing superiority to the buyers. Sarcasm co-occurs with many linguistic strategies and is expressed in a huge variety of ways: via rhetorical questions, exclamations, ‘general truths,’ self-politeness, insults, negation, mock-politeness, challenges etc.

One example of sarcasm in the buyer’s comment is presented in (83):

- (83) Buyer: *Przelew 14 dni od zakończenia aukcji.Mimo to w tym samym dniu wystąpił o zwrot prowizji i nie odstąpił od zwrotu do dziś.Przez te 14 dni nie przysłał choćby jednego maila z ponagleniem zapłaty. Czyżby nie umiał pisać??*  
 [The transfer 14 days after finalizing the auction. Still he asked for a return of the fee and has not given up on it until today. During these 14 days he didn’t send even one reminder email. Could he possibly be unable to read?]

The last sentence is a highly sarcastic rhetorical question. The overall assumption, and part of background knowledge, is of course that the seller must be literate, otherwise it would

hardly be possible for him to use Allegro.pl in the first place. The implicature is that the seller must be suspicious or unreliable and not serious enough to do business with.

In the next example (discussed in section II.8), the buyer shows the seller as mean and petty:

- (84) *Buyer: Wystąpił o zwrot prowizji a dzień później otrzymał email z dowodem wpłaty, mimo to nie odstąpił od prowizji. Teraz ma monety, prowizję i pieniądze. Brak wyrozumiałości mimo wielu wspólnych udanych transakcji. Czekam na negatywy od Pana.*  
[He asked to have the fee returned, one day later he got an email with the paying-in slip and yet he has not given up on the fee. Now he has the coins, the fee and the money. No understanding despite many transactions we have conducted together. And now I am waiting for your negative feedback.]

The sarcastic last sentence helps to derive an elaborate and multilayered implicature: 'you are bound to give me negative feedback in revenge, because you are vengeful, and this is predictable and typical of you. So what are you waiting for?' Thus this challenging comment is also a veiled accusation of ill will on the part of the seller.

Another sarcastic comment by the buyer is shown in (85):

- (85) *Buyer: Tak po 4 miesiącach próśb - w końcu otrzymałem ! Napisał (patrz niżej) "pocztą POMYŁKOWO odrzuciła reklamację ponieważ pomyliła przesyłki" Dziś w mailu powiadomił "reklamacja nie została przyjęta" (bez wyjaśnień?)- o co tu chodzi ?*  
[After ca. 4 months of requesting – I finally got it! He wrote (see below): "the post office mistakenly turned down the complaint as it has confused the parcels." Today he informed me in an email that 'my complaint has not been accepted' – what is going on in here?]

The exclamation mark at the end of the fragment makes it even more sarcastic because of the mock joy at 'finally' receiving an item which had been expected a long time before. The contrast between this 'mock delight' and mentioning four months of waiting accounts for both sarcasm and, of course, impoliteness. The implicature of this comment is 'you are unprofessional and not serious.'

In this reply, sarcasm is used more than once:

- (86) *Buyer: Brakowało kilku stron, obowiązkiem sprzedawcy jest to sprawdzić. Zakładam, że to przeoczenie, ale komentarz jest jaki jest.*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: czw 02 cze 2005 22:04:09 CEST] Wiesz co to jest 'reklamacja'? Tzn. że zgłaszasz problem i dostajesz zwrot kasy. Miło że się nie skontaktowałeś przed wystawieniem komentarza. Thanx.*  
[Buyer: A few pages were missing, it's the seller's duty to check it. I assume it was just an oversight, but the comment is the way it is.  
Seller: Do you know what 'a complaint' is? It means that you inform me about your problem and you get your dough back. Nice of you not to have contacted me before posting your comment. Thanx.]

First, a rhetorical question is posed, along with a very simple definition. Since the term 'complaint' is obvious to most people of average intelligence, this move serves to portray

the buyer as unintelligent. The second instance of sarcasm is the antiphrastic comment on the buyer's behaviour *miło* ([it was] nice of you) and the rest of the sentence, which is scathing and condemning. The concluding 'Thanx' enhances the impoliteness. The implicature here is that the buyer has bad intentions.

A sarcastic retort produced by seller can be also observed in (87):

- (87) *Buyer: towar uszkodzony (uszkodzony – A.W.) !!!!! sprzedawca mimo wielu sposobow dogadania sie nie chcial uznac reklamacji nie polecam*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:śro 01 lip 2009 00:44:16 CEST] Towar czyli żarówka została wysłana dobra. Po pewnym czasie otrzymaliśmy informacje że nie świeci. Reklamacja nie została rozpatrzona ponieważ towar nie został przesłany do serwisu. Serwis nie działa wirtualnie.*  
*[Buyer: product damaged! The seller wouldn't accept the complaint despite many ways of solving the problem, don't recommend him*  
*Seller: The product, i.e. the bulb, was sent in good condition. After some time we heard that it wasn't working. The complaint was not dealt with because the product wasn't sent to the service. The service doesn't work virtually.]*

The last sentence again states the obvious, which evokes the sarcastic effect very successfully; most people realize that shopping online is possible, but faulty goods must be physically sent to the seller, otherwise no complaint will be dealt with. The implicature here could be 'you are not too bright,' or additionally 'you are dishonest.'

In (88), the seller reminds the buyer that there are other ways to communicate than just the telephone, and to ridicule him and present him as a troublemaker:

- (88) *Buyer: Niepoważny allegrowicz, fatalny kontakt, przeciągał odpowiedź przez miesiąc i potem zrezygnował, czekałem za długo, zmarnowałem kilka telefonów, NIE POLECAM*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:śro 12 lip 2006 21:00:13 CEST] NO TO MASZ PROBLEM „JESLI NIE CZYTASZ MOICH EMAIL iiiii !!!! pozdrówka*  
*[Buyer: A non-serious Allegro user, extremely bad contact, he put off his reply for a month and then gave up, I waited too long and wasted a few phonecalls. I don't recommend*  
*Seller: Well, you do have a problem indeed if you don't read my emails! Greetings]*

The seller implicates that his client is overly fussy or has difficulties with communication, or maybe is old-fashioned.

- (89) *Buyer: Rzeczywiście czegoś tu nie rozumiem ! Firanelli chce pozytyw za nieudaną transakcję i 5 miesięcy oczekiwania - mimo że poczta zagubiła ! - to transakcję zawarłem z Panem a nie z pocztą i proszę mi wierzyć nikogo nie straszę !*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:czw 19 kwi 2007 13:57:51 CEST] zacytuje słowa z emaila który do mnie napisał: "(...) od 3 tygodni wierzę Panu że przesyłka została nadana i że złożył Pan reklamację (...)" więc po otrzymaniu 3 tygodnie temu skanu potwierdzenia nadania, wierzy, ale mści się za pocztę*  
*[Buyer: Indeed I don't understand something here! Firanelli [=the seller's username –A.W.] wants positive feedback for a failed transaction and 5 months of waiting; although the post has lost [the product] I conducted this transaction with you - not with the postal services – and believe me, I'm not threatening anyone here!*  
*Seller: I quote your words from your email: 'I have believed you for 3 weeks that the product was sent to me and that you have issued a complaint,' so after receiving the scan of the postal receipt he still believes, but takes his revenge for the postal service's mistake]*

Here, the last sentence is sarcastic; it shows the buyer's behaviour as conflictive and inconsistent (on the one hand he trusts the seller and on the other hand he does things behind his back) and implicates that the buyer is either self-contradictory or scheming.

**3.4. Ask a rhetorical question** (examples: VII/1, X/1, X/3, XIV/1b, XVI/1, XVIII/1, XXII/1, XXII/4b, XXIV/8, XXVI/5, XXVI/9, XXVI/10, XXVII/6a-c, XXVII/10, XXVIII/11, XXVIII/14a,c, XXVIII/2, XXVIII/5, XXVIII/4, XXVIII/9, XXVIII/11, XXVIII/15, XXVIII/20, XXIX/1, XXIX/3, XXIX/8, XXIX/14, XXIX/16, XXIX/19, XXIX/20, XXIX/23, XXIX/24, XXIX/30, XXX/3, XXX/5, XXX/6b-d, XXX/7, XXX/8, XXX/13, XXX/16, XXX/17, XXX/18, XXX/21, XXX/22a-c, XXX/24, XXX/31, XXXI/5, XXXI/17, XXXI/20, XXXI/32, XXXI/35, XXXI/36, XXXI/41, XXXII/2, XXXII/5, XXXII/28, XXXII/32c,g-i,l, XXXIII/20, XXXIII/27, XXXIII/34, XXXIII/36a, XXXIII/39, XXXIII/45, XXXIII/48, XXXIII/60, XXXIV/4, XXXIV/8, XXXIV/9, XXXIV/19c, XXXIV/41, XXXIV/53, XXXIV/58, XXXIV/64, XXXIV/66, XXXIV/80, XXXIV/87, XXXIV/98, XXXIV/101, XXXIV/103, XXXIV/105, XXXIV/116, XXXIV/119, XXXIV/155)

Rhetorical questions<sup>29</sup> have the capacity and potential to trigger off verbal conflicts. In the data, they are parts of longer comments and convey impoliteness very successfully (e.g. Bousfield 2008). Very often they are coupled with sarcasm, therefore they have been mentioned in the previous section. Like non-rhetorical questions, they may be divided into two types: closed, or yes/no questions, and open questions that start with a wh-word. The intended meanings conveyed could also be respectively divided into two groups: if the question is closed, its implicature usually claims the opposite to the literal meaning, while if it is an open question, the implicature degrades or criticizes the opponent.

Example (90) includes a rhetorical question produced by a buyer:

- (90) *Buyer: Przelew 14 dni od zakończenia aukcji. Mimo to w tym samym dniu wystąpił o zwrot prowizji i nie odstąpił od zwrotu do dziś. Przez te 14 dni nie przysłał choćby jednego maila z ponagleniem zapłaty. Czyżby nie umiał pisać??*  
*[The transfer 14 days after finalizing the auction. Still he asked for a return of the fee and has not given up on it until today. During these 14 days he didn't send even one reminder email. Could he possibly be unable to read?]*

This question is a yes/no (closed) one, so it bears an implicature which is contrary to the literal meaning, i.e. that the seller indeed can write. Another layer of intended meaning is that 'since he can write and he ignores the buyer, he is negligent and unprofessional'.

The next comment, also based on a yes/no (closed) rhetorical question, is very sarcastic:

- (91) *Buyer: Towar nie zgodny z opisem. Zamawiałem tło nie dzielone otrzymałem dzielone. Chyba coś nie tak!!!?*

<sup>29</sup> Lakoff (1976: 112) observes that rhetorical questions could be named aberrant questions, as they have the ability to "force the addressee, if he were to attempt to answer, to violate one of the rules of conversation."

*[The product doesn't fit the description. I ordered an undivided background and received a divided one. There must be something wrong, mustn't there?]*

Since it is a closed question, its implicature claims the opposite to the literal meaning, i.e. 'something is obviously wrong with the items.' Additionally, the use of the hedge *chyba* (I guess) accounts for the sarcasm.

The question in (92) is an open one, so the implicature would be derived via a different path:

(92) *Buyer: ZEROWY KONTAKT.ZAMÓWIONE RZECZY NA BLISKO 800zŁ CZEKAM JUŻ PRAWIE MIESIĄC.JAK DŁUGO MOŻNA CZEKAĆ NA ZAMÓWIONY TOWAR- A WNA STR."O MNI" CZAS WYSYŁKI OK.1-2 DNI. NIE KUPUJCIE SZKODA WASZEGO CZASU I ZDROWIA.STANOWCZO O D R A D Z A M !!!!*

*[No contact. Things ordered are worth ca. 800 zł. I've been waiting for nearly a month. How long can one wait for the goods – and the 'About me' section says shipment takes 1-2 days. Don't buy there, it's a waste of your time and health. I advise against this one!]*

In this critique, the buyer uses a rhetorical question about how long one can wait for the goods, yet he states the time duration (a month) in the previous sentence. This question implicates that the time spent on waiting has been far too long and therefore unacceptable, so the seller is depicted, indirectly, as unreliable.

The next comment illustrates a complex structure made of rhetorical questions:

(93) *Buyer: kompletny debil z tego kolesia zamawiałem paczkę której nigdy nie dostałem prosiłem sie 3 tygodnie. po drugie jak nie ma sie awizo to z czym mam iść na poczte może kurwa mam chodzić po wszystkich pocztach i pytać sie o paczkę do mnie.*

*[This guy is a complete moron I ordered a parcel I never got and I asked for it for 3 weeks. Also, if you don't have the confirmation of shipment, what should you go to the post office with; maybe I should fucking go to every post office and ask about the parcel for me.]*

Here we are dealing with two rhetorical questions: an open one and a yes/no one. The buyer expresses his indignation but chooses rhetorical questions to sound even more convincing and 'authentic.' Finally, the implicature that may be drawn is as follows: 'you are unprofessional, not serious and disrespectful.'

In examples (94) – (98) there are rhetorical questions issued by the sellers:

(94) *Buyer: Po 10 dniach, 3 telefonach i kilku e-mailach dowiaduje się że filtr z powodu wybrakowanej partii jest niedostępny, dobrze że zadzwoniłem bo pewnie czekał bym dalej. Kontakt telefoniczny jak i e-mailowy bardzo kiepski. Sami sobie jesteście winni*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:śro 24 cze 2009 23:11:30 CEST] Brak wpłaty za towar , zerowy kontakt tel. jak i mailowy.Zero odzewu na nasze upomnienia o potwierdzenie zakupu towaru. I kto tu jest winny!!!*

*[Buyer: After 10 days, 3 phone calls and a few emails I find out that the filter is unavailable because of a faulty batch; it's a good thing that I called because otherwise I would have waited even longer. Phone and email contact - very bad. And you are the ones to blame*

*Seller: No payment for the product, no phone or email contact. No response to our reminders about confirming the payment for the product. And who is to blame now!!]*

This rhetorical question repeats and transforms part of the buyer's utterance in order to shift the blame onto the adversary. The implicature would be, naturally, 'it is you who is to blame, not me.'

(95) *Buyer: Z przykrością wystawiam NEGATYW, Bardzo słaby kontak ze sprzedajacym, Zależało mi na czasie ,czekałem prawie 2 tyg. Nie powiadomił mnie o opóźnieniu ,Dostałem szafkę inną niż wylicytowałem,Nie odpowiada na meila z reklamacją.Nie POLECAM Seller: [Odpowiedź z: pią 09 lut 2007 14:36:06 CET] JEŻELI INNY TO DLACZEGO PAN ODEBRAŁ TOWAR ????? ISTNIEJE JESZCZE COŚ TAKIEGO JAK REKLAMACJA . NIE ROBIMY PROBLEMU Z WYMIANĄ !!!!!!! INNI ALLEGROWICZE TEGO DOŚWIADCZYLI !!!!!!!*

*[Buyer: I regret to give the seller a negative comment. Very poor contact with the seller. I wanted to get the product on time, I waited almost 2 weeks. He didn't inform me about the delay. I got a different cupboard than the one I bid for. He doesn't reply to my email with a complaint. I don't recommend*

*Seller: If it's a different product then why did you collect it in the first place? There is also something called a complaint. We don't make any problems with replacing the products! Other users have experienced that!]*

This question discloses and stigmatises the buyer's two-faced behaviour (and possibly two-faced nature); the implicature obviously reads 'you are dishonest and crafty.'

(96) *Buyer: Zakupiłam dwa komplety misek, w tym jeden był potłuczony, allegrowicz zaproponował że mogę u niego kupić miskę, tylko że w tej całej transakcji to ja mam ponosić koszty nie wiem dlaczego.*

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z: pon 24 gru 2007 14:29:48 CET] NIE TOLERUJE KŁAMSTWA!!!Zgodilem się wymienić, a NIE SPRZEDAĆ stłuczoną miskę, tylko nie wiem dla czego ja mam płacić za przesyłkę.Nie trzeba było odbierać paczki, jeśli miski były stłuczone!Poczta odpowiada za przesyłkę a nie ja!*

*[Buyer: I ordered two sets of bowls, one was broken. The seller suggested that I buy another bowl in his shop, but I don't see why I should be the one who pays here.*

*Seller: I don't tolerate lying! I agreed to replace, and not to sell, the broken bowl but I don't see why I have to pay for the shipment. The parcel shouldn't have been collected if the bowls were broken! It's the post office's responsibility and not mine!]*

Here, the rhetorical question is an embedded clause, and the main clause introduces reported speech. In his attempt at defending his own self face, the seller implicates that he has been treated unfairly in return for his helpfulness and professionalism. The buyer is presented, via implicature, as ungrateful and scheming.

In the following exchange, the entire seller's reply is made of two of rhetorical questions:

(97) *Buyer: Zła jakość materiałów w naszyjnikach, w opisie na allegro nie ma słowa o wyrobach chińskich! (naklejka na opakowaniu) część musiałam naprawiać, nie wiem czy nadadzą się do handlu albo chodzenia.Gratis, zepsuty. + za szybką wysyłkę.*

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:wto 24 lis 2009 23:26:21 CET] TAK A NA PANI AUKCJACH TO WSZYSTKO JEST Z FRANCJI WŁOCH I HISZPANII ZAPEWNE? CZYŻ TE PIĘKNE PRZEDMIOTY NIE SA ZROBIONE Z CHIŃSKICH KORALIKÓW?*

*[Buyer: Bad quality of the materials in the necklaces, the Allegro listing doesn't mention Chinese products! (cf. the sticker on the packaging), I had to fix some of them myself, I don't know if they are fit for being sold or worn. The free product broken. + for quick*



*shipment.*

*Seller: Oh really, and everything you put up on your auctions is surely from France, Italy and Spain? Aren't those beautiful objects made of Chinese beads?]*

Here, there are two highly sarcastic closed rhetorical questions. They put in doubt the items the buyer might have in stock (presumably the buyer also sells jewellery, or jewellery-related items) and question their quality. Therefore the buyer is portrayed as hard to please and possibly deceitful, the implicature being 'you are overly critical and you are stretching the truth.'

The seller's reply in (98) also includes two rhetorical questions:

- (98) *Buyer: zamowilam 2 alginy doszedl jeden sprzedajacy nie raczy odpisywac na maile poprosil o numer kontaktowy po czym milczy.pozatym produkty uzytkownika chyba sa lewe poniewaz pozdychaly mi rybki odkad zaczelam ich uzywac*  
*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:sob 06 cze 2009 14:00:45 CEST] SZCZYT IDIOTYZMU!!!Kto będzie podrabiał środki za 3,50zł?Dostała preparat Tropicala ORYGINALNIE ZAPAKOWANY z datą ważności 2012r.I w jaki sposób poprosiłem o nr.tel.jeśli nie odpisuje?Od 4 dni jej tel.wyłączony!Całkowity brak kontaktu*  
*[Buyer: I ordered two containers of alginic acid, only one arrived, he doesn't bother to answer emails, asked for my phone number and then he stays silent. Besides, his products must be lame because my fish died on me after I started using them*  
*Seller: How moronic is that! Who will falsify products worth 3.50 zł? She got Tropical originally packaged, expiry date 2012. And how could I ask for her phone number if she just won't reply? Her phone's been switched off for 4 days. No contact whatsoever]*

Since rhetorical questions are by nature indirect, here they additionally show how outrageously absurd these accusations are. The first question ridicules the buyer (also by adducing the low price of the goods), while the next one discloses his inattentiveness. The overall implicature here is 'you are laughable and preposterous.'

### 3.5. Question the other's reputation (all examples)

This strategy is different from all the other strategies discussed here. Its specific nature stems from the fact that it is so potent that it does not even have to be communicated. In fact, it could be viewed as a basic underlying motivation behind every comment issued by any buyer or seller, or a prototypical motivation or objective at the level of sophisticated understanding (Sperber 1994). Therefore it could be claimed that in this very context this strategy can be found in every comment in the data set above the communicative level.

As can be inferred, 'Question the other's reputation' takes various forms and, since strategies and speech acts do overlap (Schiffrin 1994), it is combined with sarcasm, rhetorical questions, criticizing, accusations, insults and so on. Both clients and sellers issue

such comments, but more frequently the seller's good name is put in doubt by the dissatisfied, or even infuriated, buyer. Crucially, in my Allegro.pl data, questioning the other's reputation provides an additional, quite aggressive dimension to impoliteness: it may result in the opponent's losing credibility, trust and prospective clients. It could be argued that the reputation of the seller is more at stake. Many sellers treat their Allegro.pl-based business as a source of income, therefore any attack on their good name might possibly cause a decline or crisis in their business. Such comments trigger the implicature: 'you are a liar, you are dishonest, not to be trusted.' This strategy usually provokes sharp replies in which the sellers deny, contradict and disagree with their opponents, all the while demonstrating self-politeness.

One simple way of questioning the opponent's reputation is to put the terms *seller*, *company*, *client* or *shop* in inverted commas. (99), i.e. example XXX/20 in the appendix, is a case in point:

(99) *Buyer: Dzisiaj jest prawie miesiąc od daty transakcji. Najpierw Pan nie kojarzył a teraz się zawiesił. Wiwat super sprzedawcy!*

*Seller: [Odpowiedź z:nie 24 sty 2010 22:15:27 CET] Ani się nie zawiesiłem, ani nie przestałem kojarzyć. Za to "klient" niestety skojarzył nas chyba z kimś innym... - a szkoda.*

*[Buyer: Today a month has passed since the transaction was made. First you had no idea about it and then got suspended. Three cheers for a SuperSeller!]*

*Seller: I neither got suspended nor did I stop remembering. In turn, the 'client' thought that we were somebody else... which is a shame.]*

In this exchange, the buyer casts doubt on the seller's good opinion by producing a highly sarcastic exclamation. The implicature is the absolute opposite of the literal meaning and it presents the seller as not worth the title of Super Seller. It could be argued that the seller's response is an attempt at the strategy, because the use of inverted commas puts the buyer's reputation in doubt. Finally, this comment is also sarcastic, which proves that sarcasm is indeed quite versatile and appears in a wide variety of contexts and is coupled with various other rhetorical devices.

In (100), i.e. example XXXII/29 in the appendix, the buyer also tries to damage the seller's reputation:

(100) *Buyer: Pieniądże dawno przebrane, żadnego kontaktu ze sprzedającym, dodam mu jeszcze jeden negatyw, lepiej niech skończy ten handel*

*[Money transferred a long time ago, no contact with the seller, I'll just give him one more negative comment, he'd better close down this business of his]*

In the buyer's statement that he is going to add a negative comment to those the seller has supposedly gathered, there is a scalar implicature: 'he has already received a number of them,' which is a serious attempt at tarnishing the seller's good name. This statement, along

with his highly sarcastic suggestion that the seller go out of business, seems to generate an implicature: ‘you are not reliable or worth doing business with,’ which is intensely impolite.

In the next instance (example XXXIV/44 from the appendix), the seller’s reputation is attacked via a different device:

- (101) *Buyer: za ignorancję brak jakiegokolwiek kontaktu. towar miał być we środę. czwartek piątek. Poza tym firma miesi się na ulicy lalala 1 itp. nip 000000000 regon 000000 nr konta 000000000 telefon zgadnijcie :-\ podany tel. na allegro nie odpowiada*  
[My negative comment is] for ignoring me and no contact at all. The goods were to arrive on Wednesday. Thursday, then Friday. Besides the company is located at 1 Lalala Street, its Tax Id. No. is 000000000, its Business Id. No - 000000000, bank account number - 0000000, phone number – well, guess.. :-\ the one given by Allegro is unavailable]

Here the buyer sarcastically implicates that the seller’s contact details are at least suspicious or that they do not exist, so logically the seller’s company may not exist either. The higher-level implicature is that the seller is not to be trusted, is playing games, misleading and cheating the buyer etc.

Another comment attacking the seller’s reputation in a similar way is shown in (103), or example XXXIV/57 in the appendix:

- (102) *Buyer: Zaden sklep, byłem na miejscu, lewdo znajdziesz dom, "sprzedaje" Ci facet na schodach w imieniu właściciela, na telefon nie odpowiada, i widzę że przedmiot znowu jest na aukcji !!!*  
[It is no shop, I was there, you can hardly find the house, you are ‘sold’ the products by a bloke on the stairs, on behalf of the owner, he won’t answer the phone and I can see the product put up on action again!]

The seller’s shop, as well as his ways of doing business and finalizing transactions, are presented as shady and unprofessional. The direct way of addressing the reader (the personal pronoun *Ci*) and its story-like character make the comment more convincing and believable. Also, the use of the negative determiner *żaden*, as well as of inverted commas with the term ‘sells’ are another attack on the seller’s credibility. This criticism is, of course, indirect and projects the following implicature: ‘you are not serious, your reputation is at least dubious.’

At times, the author chooses to put in doubt, or attack, the opponent’s reputation and good name by adducing the negative feedback they have accumulated (example XXXIV/164):

- (103) *Buyer: Mój pierwszy wysawiony negatyw od kiedy jestem na allegro. Patrząc na ilość negatywów w sumie nie ma się czemu dziwić. Brak towaru, brak kontaktu a dziś przyszedł mail z allegro że sprzedawca zażądał zwrotu prowizji z powodu.... Przedmiot został skradziony? – A.W.]*  
[My first negative comment since I joined Allegro. Little wonder when you look at the number of his negative comments. No goods, no contact, and today I got an email from Allegro saying that the seller demanded the fee back because of... the product having been stolen!]

The author mentions the number of negative comments gathered by the seller with the intent of exacerbating the attack and making the message sound more impolite and damaging. The hidden meaning would be: ‘he is bad, but look at his negative feedback and there’s nothing surprising in it, little wonder.’

On some occasions, it is the seller that attempts to attack the buyer’s reputation (example XXVI/9 from the appendix):

(104) *Seller: Paczka wysłana na drugi dzień, podwójnie awizowana. Twierdzi że nie dostał awiza. Nawet nie raczył się podejść na pocztę!!! Trzeba wyczyścić allegro z takich "kupujących"!!! ODRADZAM!!*

*[The product was sent on the next day, has been advised twice. He claims he hasn’t received the confirmation of shipment. He didn’t even bother to go to the post office! Allegro must be cleansed of such buyers! I advise against doing business with him!]*

Here, the seller implicates that the buyer is untrustworthy, by simply using a pair of inverted commas with the term ‘buyer.’ Since the last sentence postulates that such users be removed from, or banned using Allegro.pl, an additional implicature might be detected as well: ‘you do not deserve to be part of the Allegro.pl community’ and ‘you are not a true Allegro user.’

**3.6. ‘No-comment’ strategy (flouting the Maxim of Quantity)** (examples: VII/1, XIV/2, XX/5, XXVI/11, XXVIII/13b, XXIX/33, XXX/26, XXXII/33b, XXXIII/5, XXXIII/32, XXXIII/56, XXXIII/57, XXXIV/2, XXXIV/56, XXXIV/165)

Some Allegro.pl users claim in their negative comments that ‘they do not intend to say anything.’ This ‘no-comment’ reaction, or being non-informative on purpose, equals the flouting of the Gricean Maxim of Quantity (Grice 1975). It is also a sign of impoliteness, since it implicates that the author is disappointed, outraged etc. with the opponent’s behaviour, and does not wish to dignify such low behaviour with a longer description. Thus the choice to be uninformative, or under-informative, is meant to purposefully degrade the opponent and, paradoxically, to sound more impolite and more critical. In the data, such comments are issued both by buyers and sellers; the implicatures of this feedback vary, depending on the context and situation (of course, they try to present the opponent in a negative light, as untrustworthy, unprofessional, stupid, not serious, etc.)

The first comment in this category has been produced by a dissatisfied buyer:

(105) *Brak towaru, brak kontaktu. Prostu żadnych informacji a o towarze to już nie wspomne*  
*[No product, no contact. Basically no information, not to mention the product itself.]*

In order to express his indignation, the user chooses to be uninformative, laconic and cryptic in both the first, non-finite clause and the second, finite one. This superficial ‘not saying anything’ and ‘refraining from any comment’ carries, in fact, a very critical implicature: ‘it was so bad that it does not deserve any spoken comment.’

The next two examples include comments issued by sellers:

- (106) *Kupujący nie odebrał przesyłki za pobraniem i to jest cały komentarz do transakcji.*  
[The buyer chose COD and didn’t pick up the goods and this is all I have to say about this transaction.]

The seller must have been outraged with the buyer’s behaviour, but he/she nevertheless refrains from a direct critical statement. Since the criticism is – on the surface - left unsaid, the reader is led to figure out the comment’s implicature: ‘you are ridiculous / not serious, it is all your fault.’

- (107) *Seller: [Odpowiedź z:sob 06 cze 2009 13:22:01 CEST]: Kupił w kwietniu 2008.Używał tą "niewydajną" pompę przez pół roku po czym stwierdził że ni by wydajność ma niższą! Wymieniłem na nową.W mailu napisał że ok! Po miesiącu ni by dalej stała"niewydajna".Miał odesłać. Brak mi słów*  
[Seller: He bought the product in 2008, used this ‘inefficient’ pump for half a year and then maintained it was less efficient. I replaced it. In the email he said it was OK! A month later it was still ‘inefficient.’ He was supposed to send it back. I’m at a loss for words]

The ‘no-comment comment’ is preceded by a longer narrative describing the buyer’s scandalous behaviour and, as a conclusion, it reinforces the overall implicature: you are pathetic and not to be trusted.’

#### 4. Linguistic means

Allegro users succeed in expressing impolite beliefs not only thanks to the choice of vocabulary, a particular rhetorical device or a given speech act, which combines both linguistic and rhetorical means. At times, even elements smaller than the word itself can be quite helpful in creating an impolite message and deriving an impolite implicature. Choices involving these smaller elements could also be labelled impoliteness strategies in their own right. Allegro.pl users resort to changing the Polish spelling convention so that it fits their intention to threaten the opponent’s face by using capital and lower case letters when they are not conventionally expected (e.g. using block capitals). They also cast doubt on the

other's reputation by placing some lexical items in inverted commas, consciously ignoring the spacing, using litotes or antiphrasis and applying identity markers which are blatantly impolite in the context of the exchanges.

#### **4.1. Modify the spelling convention**

##### **4.1.1. Use capital letters**

###### **4.1.1.1. Capitalise every word in the sentence (example XXX/26)**

Starting every word in the sentence with a capital letter is obviously not part of the linguistic convention and can be seen as a specific realization of impoliteness – namely, it draws the reader's attention, makes the word conspicuous and therefore marked, e.g.:

(108) *Nie Polecam - Odradzam Zakup U tego Sprzedającego*  
[I Don't Recommend – I Discourage You From Buying From This Seller]

The impolite implicature is thus intensified; the overall effect is that the feedback gains a sense of urgency and becomes more aggressive, e.g.:

###### **4.1.1.2. Use capital letters when not expected (examples: XXII/2, XXII/4a-b, XXXIII/30, XXXIV/125)**

At times, the users capitalize a word in their sentence to draw the reader's attention – not just to the word, but mainly to the adversary's problematic or scandalous behaviour. The ultimate effect is, obviously, a stronger impolite implicature:

(109) [*Odpowiedź z:pon 09 mar 2009 10:36:12 CET*] *Zakup 03.03.2009 karma z data ważności 21.09.2009r !!! Kolejna już próba wyłudzenia części pieniędzy zastaniając się iż piesek nie zdarzy zjesc przed terminem spożycia !!! Zalecam zastanowić się nad sobą Bardzo Poważnie !!!*  
[The date of the purchase - 3 March 2009, the dog food's expiry date – 21 Sep 2009!!!Yet another attempt at extortion with the excuse that the doggie won't manage to eat it up before the sell-by date! I suggest a Really Great Deal Of Soul-Searching!]

The capitalized element is the adverbial phrase *bardzo poważnie* (very seriously), which modifies the verb *zastanowić* (consider). The seriousness of the action depicted by the verb is emphasized, therefore the situation is portrayed as dramatic and the buyer is presented as pathetic, which aggravates the overall impoliteness effect.

**4.1.1.3. Use block capitals** (examples: I/1, III/1, VI/1, VI,2, VIII/1, VIII/2, IX/1, X/1, X/2, X/3, XII/2, XII/3, XIII/1, XIII/2, XIII/3, XIV/2, XV/1, XV/2, XV/3, XV/4, XVI/1, XVI/4, XVIII/2, XVIII/4, XVIII/5, XIX/1, XX/1, XX/2a-b, XX/3, XX/4, XX/5, XXI/2, XXI/3, XXI/4, XXI/5, XXII/1, XXII/3, XXII/4a-b, XXIII/1, XXIII/3, XXIII/4, XXIII/5, XXIII/6, XXIII/7, XXIII/9, XXIV/1, XXIV/2, XXIV/5, XXIV/6, XXIV/7a-b, XXIV/8, XXIV/9, XXIV/10, XXV/1, XXV/2, XXV/3, XXV/5, XXV/7, XXV/8, XXV/9, XXV/10, XXV/11, XXV/12, XXVI/1, XXVI/3, XXVI/4, XXVI/5, XXVI/6, XXVI/7, XXVI/8, XXVI/9, XXVI/10, XXVI/13, XXVI/14, XXVII/2, XXVII/3, XXVII/5, XXVII/6a, XXVII/8, XXVII/10, XXVII/12, XXVII/13, XXVII/14a-d, XXVII/15a-b, XXVIII/6, XXVIII/7, XXVIII/8, XXVIII/11, XXVIII/12, XXVIII/18, XXIX/3, XXIX/6a-b, XXIX/10, XXIX/11, XXIX/15, XXIX/21, XXIX/22, XXIX/24, XXIX/25, XXIX/27, XXIX/28, XXIX/34, XXX/2, XXX/3, XXX/7, XXX/10, XXX/11a-b, XXX/12, XXX/15, XXX/17, XXX/21, XXX/22b-c, XXX/23, XXX/24, XXX/28, XXX/29, XXX/30, XXX/31, XXXI/1, XXXI/2, XXXI/3, XXXI/4, XXXI/5, XXXI/6, XXXI/7, XXXI/8, XXXI/9, XXXI/10, XXXI/11, XXXI/12, XXXI/13, XXXI/14, XXXI/15, XXXI/16, XXXI/17, XXXI/18, XXXI/19, XXXI/21, XXXI/23a-b, XXXI/24, XXXI/25, XXXI/26a-b, XXXI/27, XXXI/28, XXXI/29, XXXI/30a-b, XXXI/31, XXXI/32, XXXI/33, XXXI/35, XXXI/36, XXXI/37a-b, XXXI/38, XXXI/39, XXXI/40, XXXI/41, XXXI/42, XXXII/4, XXXII/6, XXXII/7, XXXII/9a-b, XXXII/12, XXXII/16, XXXII/17a-b, XXXII/18, XXXII/20a-b, XXXII/23, XXXII/24, XXXII/26, XXXII/27c, XXXII/32g-l, XXXII/33c, XXXII/35, XXXII/36, XXXIII/1, XXXIII/2, XXXIII/3, XXXIII/4, XXXIII/9, XXXIII/13, XXXIII/16a-b, XXXIII/18, XXXIII/19, XXXIII/24, XXXIII/25, XXXIII/30, XXXIII/32, XXXIII/33, XXXIII/34, XXXIII/36a-b, XXXIII/38, XXXIII/39, XXXIII/40, XXXIII/41, XXXIII/42, XXXIII/46, XXXIII/47, XXXIII/48, XXXIII/50, XXXIII/51, XXXIII/52, XXXIII/54, XXXIII/57, XXXIII/58, XXXIII/60, XXXIII/61, XXXIII/62, XXXIII/63, XXXIII/65, XXXIII/66, XXXIII/67, XXXIII/68, XXXIV/1, XXXIV/2, XXXIV/3, XXXIV/4, XXXIV/6, XXXIV/8, XXXIV/11, XXXIV/14, XXXIV/15, XXXIV/19c, XXXIV/20, XXXIV/21, XXXIV/22, XXXIV/26, XXXIV/27, XXXIV/33, XXXIV/34, XXXIV/36, XXXIV/37, XXXIV/38, XXXIV/39, XXXIV/45, XXXIV/47, XXXIV/50, XXXIV/52, XXXIV/53, XXXIV/58, XXXIV/59, XXXIV/61, XXXIV/63, XXXIV/65, XXXIV/67, XXXIV/69, XXXIV/75, XXXIV/77, XXXIV/80, XXXIV/81, XXXIV/82, XXXIV/84, XXXIV/85, XXXIV/86, XXXIV/88, XXXIV/99, XXXIV/100, XXXIV/101, XXXIV/103, XXXIV/104, XXXIV/105, XXXIV/107, XXXIV/115, XXXIV/121, XXXIV/123, XXXIV/128, XXXIV/129, XXXIV/130, XXXIV/138, XXXIV/140, XXXIV/145, XXXIV/146, XXXIV/147, XXXIV/149, XXXIV/150, XXXIV/153, XXXIV/154, XXXIV/155, XXXIV/156, XXXIV/161, XXXIV/163, XXXIV/166, XXXIV/167, XXXIV/168

Using block capitals on purpose in internet conversations, discussions and chats is generally viewed as a serious breach of netiquette, since it equals screaming in face-to-face conversation. It conveys impolite beliefs even more effectively than openly stating: ‘I think that the opponent is a moron/ is not serious etc.’ An example of an offensive word being capitalized can be seen in the fragment of a comment in (110):

(110) Seller: [Odpowiedź z:sob 10 maj 2008 12:38:42 CEST] Widzicie Państwo - czasami się trafi na TABORET, obiektywnie z mojej strony nie było niedociągnięcia - transakcja kilkuzłotowa! [Well, you see, Ladies and Gentlemen - sometimes you come across a DUMMY, objectively speaking, there was no fault of mine – a transaction involving a few zlotys! – while there are no such problems with buyers who spend a few hundred zlotys! – that speaks for itself.]

In the next example, the initial word has been capitalized:

- (111) *KLIENCIE - zweryfikuj w obecności kuriera stan zabezpieczenia przesyłki oraz jej kompletności zgodności z zamówieniem oraz czy nie nastąpiło uszkodzenie mechaniczne przyjęcie przesyłki bez zastrzeżeń jest równoznaczne z akceptacją*  
*[CLIENT – please make sure, in the courier's presence, that your parcel has been securely packaged and that its contents fit your order and check the parcel for possible damage - taking the product with no objections equals accepting it]*

The first word, the vocative *kliencie*, also contributes to the impoliteness of this message, which otherwise is patronizing and states a general, obvious truth.

Sometimes an entire comment appears in block capitals, like in the instance below:

- (112) *WYLICYTOWAŁ I ZERO KONTAKTU. NIE SFINALIZOWAŁ TRANSAKCJI. NAWET NIE OKREŚLIŁ FORMY FINALIZACJI, ZUPEŁNY BRAK KONTAKTU MAŁOWEGO I POTWIERDZENIA WOLI SFINALIZOWANIA AUKCJI. ZDECYDOWANY NEGATYW !!!*  
*[HE WON THE AUCTION AND NO CONTACT. HE DIDN'T FINISH THE TRANSACTION. DIDN'T EVEN SPECIFY HOW TO PAY ETC. NO CONTACT AT ALL, NO EMAILS AND CONFIRMATION OF PAYMENT DETAILS. CERTAINLY A NEGATIVE COMMENT]*

There is, however, one doubt concerning such comments: such spelling could be the writer's conscious choice or could be unintentional and purely accidental (caused by e.g. hurry, inattention, strong emotions, forgetting to switch off the Caps Lock key or switching it on by mistake).

#### **4.1.2. Use a lower case letter instead of a capital letter** (examples: XXXII/17a, XXXIV/101)

The situation is converse to that described in section 4.1.1.2.: using a lower case letter to begin a word which should start with a capital letter (usually an honorific) can also aggravate the impoliteness effect and consequently degrade and humiliate the opponent. In this example, this strategy is employed by a buyer:

- (113) *Szczerze odradzam transakcji z tym panem /z. małej litery/postępowanie jego jest z pogranicza oszustwa sprzedaje towar wart 1zł a pobiera za koszt wysyłki 10 zł mimo że z dokumentów wynika coś innego.Proszę uważać.*  
*[I advise you not to do business with this gentleman (the lower case letter intended) his behaviour is borderline fraudulent he sells goods for 1 złoty and charges 10 zł for shipment though his documents suggest something else. Please beware.]*

This buyer even explains that it was his choice to spell the Polish honorific *pan* with a lower case letter, which is a breach of Polish spelling convention in correspondence (Huszczka



1996 [2006]: 102-125), so he highlights his intentionality. The overall aim of this manoeuvre is to stress his dissatisfaction, degrade the seller and to implicate: 'you are not worthy of my respect.'

**4.2. Use inverted commas** (examples: III/1, XVIII/1, XXIII/5, XXVI/8, XXVI/9, XXVI/11, XXVI/13, XXIX/15, XXIX/34, XXX/20, XXXI/20, XXXIII/68, XXXIV/57)

Allegro users deliberately put terms such as 'sprzedawca,' 'allegrowicz,' 'sklep,' 'kupujący' 'supersprzedawca' or 'klient' in between inverted commas to show their indignation and lack of respect towards the opponent, implicating that they are unprofessional and unreliable. Such a strategy could also serve as a potential warning for the readers against transactions with such users.

(114) *Ani się nie zawiesiłem, ani nie przestałem kojarzyć. Za to "klient" niestety skojarzył nas chyba z kimś innym... - a szkoda.*  
[I neither got suspended nor did I stop remembering. In turn, the 'client' thought that we were somebody else... which is a shame.]

**4.3. Do not use spacing** (examples: XXVII /12, XXXIV/139)

The data includes one comment whose author does not use spacing - presumably for the sake of expressing herself effectively (despite the limitations on the number of signs used) and fully conveying impolite beliefs:

(115)

*Jeśli Kupiony Produkt Nie Będzie Wam Się Podobać, Bądź Nie Spełni Waszych Oczekiwań, Sugeruję Jednak Go Nie Zwracać. Przekonałam Się O tym. Nie Doczekałam Się OdpNa Maila, Nie Dostałam Zwrotu Pieniędzy . Produkt Był Nieużywany. Mam Kwitek Z poczty. Straciłam Prawie 40zł.*  
*If You Don't Like The Product You Bought, Or If It Doesn't Match Your Expectations, I Strongly Suggest Not Returning It. I Learned It After I Didn't Get A Reply To My Email, Or My Money Back. The Product Was Not Used. I Have The Confirmation From The Post Office. I've Lost Almost 40zł.*

This strategy also contributes to the negative implicature by adding a sense of urgency to the feedback.

**4.4. Litotes** (examples: XXII/4a, XXXII/11a-c, XXXIII/50, XXXIV/48)

Cuddon (1998: 473) defines litotes as "a figure of speech which contains an understatement for emphasis, and is therefore the opposite of hyperbole." Using litotes often results in being complicated and convoluted on purpose and flouting the Maxim of Manner (Brown and Levinson 1978: 116). Leech (1983) justifies the use of litotes by the willingness

to observe the Politeness Principle. However, the data seem to show that litotes can lead to an impolite implicature, due to its very sarcastic and ironic effect in the context of e.g. accusations, criticisms or warnings against other (*delikatnie rzecz ujmując, chyba, nieco, pewna przesada* translatable into English as: *to put it mildly, I guess, a little, a bit of an exaggeration*, respectively). In example (116), a seller uses litotes to portray his opponent as irrational and possibly vindictive or annoying:

(116) Seller: [Odpowiedź z: 05 sie 2008 19:39] *Każdy klient otrzymuje gwarancję. Klient nie skorzystał z gwarancji. Pisanie po kilku latach takiego komentarza jest delikatnie rzecz ujmując nierozsądne, tym bardziej, że klient zakupił aparat używany.*

[Every client gets a warranty. This client hasn't used his warranty. Posting such a comment after years is, to put it mildly, unreasonable, given that the client purchased a used camera.]

In (117), the same device is used by another seller to present the buyer as mentally unstable or at least inconsistent:

(117): Seller: *Nazywanie nas oszustami jest jednak pewna przesada bo nie wzięliśmy od Pana nawet grosza.*

[Labelling us as con men is a bit of an exaggeration, however, as we didn't take a penny from you.]

#### 4.5. Antiphrasis (examples: XXI/1, XXVII/8, XXX/16, XXXII/13, XXXII/26, XXXIV/57)

As a rhetorical trope, antiphrasis has been defined by Quintilian (1921, III: 401) as closely connected with irony; Peacham (1593: 35) states that it "consisteth in the contrarie sense of a word." As Fahnestock (2011: 111) observes, "[a] single word substitution, an antiphrasis, can stand out as contrary to the sense of the rest of the sentence it appears in, as in *He had a beautiful oozing sore on his nose*. Unless audience members are dermatologists, most would assume that *beautiful* has been substituted here for a contrary term like *ugly* or *hideous*." In terms of models of communication and pragmatic theories, antiphrasis can be seen as flouting Gricean Maxim of Quality, as the literal statement is a lie (Manner, as it is convoluted on purpose). This device is also helpful in deriving an impolite implicature. An example identified in my data is seen below:

(118) *Miło że się nie skontaktowałeś przed wystawieniem komentarza.*

[Nice of you not to have contacted me before posting your comment.]

The instance is a fragment of a reply produced by a seller, who uses antiphrasis for ironic purposes. It confirms the definition suggested by Fahnestock: antiphrasis is achieved due to a single lexical item, *miło* used as substitute for another lexical item, which, among many others, might be: *niegrzecznie, nieuprzejmie, nieuczciwie*. The implicature reads: 'you are bad-mannered, have ill will and bad intentions.'

**4.6. Use inappropriate identity markers** (examples: XIV/1a, XV/4, XXIII/3, XXIV/10, XXV/1, XXV/9, XXVI/3, XXVI/4, XXVI/7, XXVI/9, XXVIII/1, XXIX/6a-b, XXX/3, XXX/10, XXX/12, XXX/25, XXXI/40, XXXII/2, XXXII/17b, XXXIII/8, XXXIII/16a-b, XXXIV/36, XXXIV/41, XXXIV/60, XXXIV/117, XXXIV/118, XXXIV/129, XXXIV/144, XXXIV/135, XXXIV/163)

This strategy, listed by Culpeper (1996: 357) amongst positive impoliteness output strategies, is often encountered in the data. In the Allegro.pl community, there are specific conventions regarding addressing terms and identity markers; usually neutral ones are preferred, like *Allegrowicz*, *kupujący / sprzedawca*, *użytkownik*, *klient* etc. However, for impolite purposes, sometimes the offended users choose identity markers which visibly break this convention, such as *ktoś*, *sprzedawczyk*, *kolega*, *koleś*, *facet*, *gość*, *gostek*, *dziecko*, *pseudosprzedawca*, *pseudoklienci* etc. As Wasilewski (2005: 179) points out, unsuitable identity markers generate a very specific implicature, in which the person dominating the interaction (or a partner, if both parties in a conversation are equal) reproaches the addressee for inappropriate conduct. The overall effect is said to be ironic (*ibid.*). Certain examples in my data seem to support Wasilewski's observation (VI/1, XXVII/14a, XXXI/10). Additionally, in the Allegro.pl comments, this strategy often coincides with, for instance, sarcasm, patronizing and / or downgrading other.

**4.7. Use a proverb, a saying or a general truth** (examples: XVIII/2, XVIII/3, XVIII/4, XXI/5, XXVI/4, XXVII/1, XXVII/6a, XXVIII/3, XXVIII/18, XXVIII/21, XXVIII/23, XXIX/2, XXIX/5, XXIX/9, XXIX/10, XXIX/12, XXIX/14, XXIX/15, XXIX/20, XXIX/22, XXIX/26, XXIX/27, XXIX/28, XXIX/35, XXX/15, XXIX/16, XXX/1, XXXI/8, XXXI/12, XXXI/21, XXXI/37a, XXXII/3, XXXII/20a, XXXII/33c, XXXIII/10, XXXIII/15, XXXIII/21, XXXIII/25, XXXIII/33, XXXIII/40, XXXIII/46, XXXIII/49a-b, XXXIII/62, XXXIV/5, XXXIV/16, XXXIV/20, XXXIV/36, XXXIV/46, XXXIV/51, XXXIV/69, XXXIV/74, XXXIV/77, XXXIV/88, XXXIV/89, XXXIV/90, XXXIV/100, XXXIV/102, XXXIV/107)

To show and strengthen one's position, rightful opinion or moral superiority, the users of Allegro.pl resort to quoting generally known proverbs and sayings. Berger and Luckmann (1966: 112) treat proverbs as examples of experiential rationalizations, i.e. "various explanatory schemes relating sets of objective meanings," describing the schemes in question as "highly pragmatic, directly related to concrete actions" (*ibid.*). Van Leeuwen

(2008: 116) observes that proverbs are similar to moral evaluations, since they also function as commonsense knowledge, regardless of whether they originate in theoretical rationalizations or not." Given that the air of authority that proverbs have, it is understandable why they are effective in conveying impoliteness as well. Another device applied here is a general truth or a platitude that is meant to ridicule, criticize, downgrade the other etc. It can also have a patronizing effect, like in *Tak się nie robi* (example XVIII/3) or *Pozorantwo nie popłaca* (example XXVII/1).

(119) *Seller: Cóż, jak widać ludzi w gorącej wodzie kąpanych nie brakuje - tym bardziej w okresie przedświątecznym.*  
*[Well, as we can see, there are quite a lot of hot-tempered people out there, especially before Christmas.]*

This general truth, or rather an all-too-obvious statement, is even preceded by two hedges *cóż* (well) and *jak widać* (as you can see). It indirectly patronizes buyer and portrays him as a hot-tempered person, who might be in a way ‘excused’ or pardoned for his immature behaviour.

(120) *Tłumaczymy jak pastusz [pastuch – A.W.] krowie - a krowa nadal nie rozumie nic.*  
*[We keep spelling it out to him and he still can't make head or tail of it.]*

Here, we have a modification / paraphrase of a well-known Polish saying (*tłumaczyć coś jak chłop krowie na miedzy* - to explain something to somebody like a peasant does to a cow on a baulk) with the aim of making fun of the buyer and portraying him / her as stupid and impervious to instruction or suggestions.

(121) *TLUMACZYSZ JEŁOPOWI A JEŁOP SWOJE*  
*[YOU EXPLAIN SOMETHING TO A MORON AND THE MORON DOESN'T LISTEN]*

This statement can be classified as a rather general truth; there is a casual elliptic clause *jełop (mówi, twierdzi) swoje* (and the moron [says / thinks] his old usual things – A.W.), with the verb omitted. The buyer is indirectly called a moron (*jełop*) and shown as stubborn and obtuse.

**4.7.1. Use a mock-general truth** (examples: XXVI/12, XXVII/11, XXVII/13, XXIX/18, XXIX/27, XXIX/35, XXXIII/55, XXXII/32f)

Using mock-general truths could be treated as a separate sub-strategy, because it is different from using platitudes, adages or proverbs. The authors of negative feedback sometimes apply mock-general truths, as they are slightly more ironic and sarcastic than general truths, and thus especially helpful in conveying impolite beliefs. They may be seen as more

situation-specific and context-specific and are often used to ridicule the opponent, like in the example below:

(122) *Akwarium 375L źle sklejone. Rozszedło się jeszcze przed zalaniem. Sprzedający każe pokrywać koszty przesyłki reklamacji - 300zł. Czyli możesz reklamować jednak nie zrobisz tego bo to nieopłacalne ./ Przemyśl i kup akwarium na miejscu.*

*[The 375L fish tank was badly glued together. It started coming apart before I filled it with water. The seller asks me to cover the complaint costs – 300 zł. So you can complain but you won't do it because it doesn't pay at all. Think it over and buy the aquarium in a regular shop.]*

The underlined fragment is a witty, ironic statement that paraphrases the 'terms and conditions' supposedly stated by the seller. The seller might not have stated them at all, but they are apparent in / could be suggested by his / her unpredictable, inconsistent or fussy behaviour.

The next two examples of mock-general truths are presented below:

(123) *Seller: Cóż, każdy rzetelny sprzedawca ma swojego mickiewiczaka.*  
*[Well, every honest seller has his own mickiewiczak]*

(124) *Seller: Widzicie Państwo - czasami się trafi na TABORET...*  
*[Well, you see, Ladies and Gentlemen - sometimes you come across a DUMMY...]*

Both comments include statements specifically made up for this exchange, with the purpose of being indirectly impolite to the buyer. In (122), we additionally have a variation of a popular Polish saying *są ludzie i taborety* (*there are people and there are also stools*), often used to comment on other people's stupidity or uncooperativeness, in order to downgrade and poke fun at the (supposedly not too bright) opponent.

**4.8. Address the audience or other parties** (examples: X/1, XV/2, XXII/1, XXII/2, XXIII/4, XXIV/2, XXV/1, XXVI/7, XXVI/10, XXVI/14, XXVII/6b, XXVII/12, XXXI/7, XXX/12, XXXI/19, XXXII/4, XXXII/9b, XXXII/13, XXXII/17a-b, XXXII/32a-c, XXXII/33a,c, XXXII/36, XXXIII/37, XXXIII/55, XXXIII/57, XXXIV/5, XXXIV/30, XXXIV/32, XXXIV/39, XXXIV/41, XXXIV/50, XXXIV/66, XXXIV/78, XXXIV/87, XXXIV/117, XXXIV/132, XXXIV/147, XXXIV/155)

Addressing the readers of the comment as if they were some audience, or addressing other parties sometimes may have the effect of spreading the news of e.g. faulty service, a dishonest business partner, the poor quality of the goods or even some criminal activity. The overall aim is to get the others' attention and shame the Allegro.pl partner by portraying them in the most negative light possible. This strategy could be compared to speaking in front of some audience in physical contexts, like giving a speech or a lecture etc. In such comments, mostly plural forms can be observed: *uważajcie*, *nie kupujcie*, the honorific *Państwo* (as in *widzicie państwo*), or even an endearment term, *moi drodzy Allegrowicze*

(my dear Allegro users). Singular imperative forms (*kupuj*, *kup*, *lubisz*) can be found in four examples.

**4.9. Avoid the agent** (examples: I/1, VII/1, VII/2, XIV/2, XV/1, XV/3, XVII/1, XVII/2a-c, XVII/3, XVIII/1, XVIII/2, XVIII/3, XXI/2, XXI/4, XXII/1, XXII/2, XXII/3, XXII/4a-b, XXII/5, XXII/6, XXIII/4, XXIII/7, XXIII/8, XXIV/1, XXIV/2, XXIV/3, XXIV/4, XXIV/5, XXIV/7a-c, XXIV/9, XXVI/1, XXVI/2, XXVI/3, XXVI/6, XXVI/7, XXVI/9, XXVI/10, XXVI/12, XXVI/14, XXVII/2, XXVII/6a-c, XXVII/9, XXVIII/1, XXVIII/4, XXVIII/6, XXVIII/11, XXVIII/12, XXVIII/15, XXVIII/17, XXVIII/20, XXVIII/21, XXVIII/22, XXIX/2, XXIX/3, XXIX/6b, XXIX/13, XXIX/16, XXIX/17, XXIX/23, XXIX/25, XXIX/26, XXIX/28, XXIX/30, XXIX/32, XXIX/34, XXX/1, XXX/2, XXX/3, XXX/4, XXX/5, XXX/6a,c-d, XXX/7, XXX/8, XXX/10, XXX/11a-b, XXX/12, XXX/13, XXX/14, XXX/16, XXX/17, XXX/18, XXX/21, XXX/22a-c, XXX/23, XXX/24, XXX/26, XXX/27, XXX/28, XXX/30, XXX/33, XXXI/1, XXXI/3, XXXI/6, XXXI/7, XXXI/8, XXXI/9, XXXI/10, XXXI/11, XXXI/13, XXXI/14, XXXI/15, XXXI/16, XXXI/20, XXXI/21, XXXI/22, XXXI/23a-b, XXXI/25, XXXI/26a, XXXI/27, XXXI/28, XXXI/29, XXXI/30a-b, XXXI/31, XXXI/32a, XXXI/33, XXXI/36, XXXI/38, XXXI/39, XXXI/40, XXXII/1, XXXII/3, XXXII/4, XXXII/6, XXXII/7, XXXII/12, XXXII/13, XXXII/15, XXXII/16, XXXII/22, XXXII/23, XXXII/16, XXXII/28, XXXII/29, XXXII/33a,c, XXXII/32a,c,e,f,i,j,l, XXXII/36, XXXII/37, XXXII/41, XXXII/42, XXXIII/1, XXXIII/3, XXXIII/6, XXXIII/7, XXXIII/9, XXXIII/10, XXXIII/11, XXXIII/12, XXXIII/15, XXXIII/16, XXXIII/19, XXXIII/20, XXXIII/22, XXXIII/23, XXXIII/24, XXXIII/25, XXXIII/26, XXXIII/27, XXXIII/28, XXXIII/29, XXXIII/31, XXXIII/34, XXXIII/36a-b, XXXIII/37, XXXIII/39, XXXIII/40, XXXIII/41, XXXIII/42, XXXIII/44, XXXIII/50, XXXIII/53, XXXIII/56, XXXIII/57, XXXIII/58, XXXIII/60, XXXIII/61, XXXIII/62, XXXIII/63, XXXIII/66, XXXIV/1, XXXIV/2, XXXIV/3, XXXIV/4, XXXIV/6, XXXIV/7, XXXIV/8, XXXIV/9, XXXIV/10, XXXIV/11, XXXIV/12, XXXIV/14, XXXIV/15, XXXIV/17, XXXIV/18, XXXIV/21, XXXIV/22, XXXIV/23, XXXIV/27, XXXIV/29, XXXIV/30, XXXIV/31, XXXIV/35, XXXIV/36, XXXIV/39, XXXIV/40, XXXIV/42, XXXIV/44, XXXIV/45, XXXIV/46, XXXIV/47, XXXIV/48, XXXIV/49, XXXIV/50, XXXIV/52, XXXIV/53, XXXIV/54, XXXIV/55, XXXIV/56, XXXIV/58, XXXIV/62, XXXIV/64, XXXIV/65, XXXIV/66, XXXIV/67, XXXIV/69, XXXIV/70, XXXIV/71, XXXIV/73, XXXIV/74, XXXIV/75, XXXIV/76, XXXIV/77, XXXIV/79, XXXIV/80, XXXIV/81, XXXIV/82, XXXIV/83, XXXIV/85, XXXIV/86, XXXIV/88, XXXIV/89, XXXIV/91, XXXIV/92, XXXIV/93, XXXIV/94, XXXIV/95, XXXIV/96, XXXIV/99, XXXIV/101, XXXIV/102, XXXIV/103, XXXIV/104, XXXIV/105, XXXIV/106, XXXIV/107, XXXIV/108, XXXIV/111, XXXIV/112, XXXIV/114, XXXIV/116, XXXIV/117, XXXIV/119, XXXIV/120, XXXIV/121, XXXIV/122, XXXIV/125, XXXIV/126, XXXIV/128, XXXIV/131, XXXIV/133, XXXIV/134, XXXIV/136, XXXIV/137, XXXIV/138, XXXIV/141a-c, XXXIV/142, XXXIV/144, XXXIV/145, XXXIV/146, XXXIV/147, XXXIV/148, XXXIV/150, XXXIV/151, XXXIV/152, XXXIV/154, XXXIV/155, XXXIV/156, XXXIV/157, XXXIV/158, XXXIV/159, XXXIV/161, XXXIV/162, XXXIV/163, XXXIV/164, XXXIV/165, XXXIV/164, XXXIV/167)

In Polish, avoiding the agent is accomplished by some linguistic resources like: using passive voice, as in the already discussed example *zostałem wyśmiany*, impersonal constructions (Polish constructions *-no*, *-to*), or longer nominal phrases kept in telegraphic

style (like *zero kontaktu, zero odpowiedzi, cisza*). These indirect structures help to reinforce the impolite effect. Telegraphic speech is present in 319 altercations, which is a substantial number, and thus proves a very popular form of indirectness. This popularity might stem from the fact that remarks with telegraphic speech are not time-consuming and rather ‘easy to think up;’ besides, they do not involve too much processing effort; therefore they lead to an ‘instant and accessible’ impolite message which implicate the lack of professionalism.

## 5. Conclusions

In this chapter, my main objective was to show the richness of strategies of indirect impoliteness applied by the users of the Allegro.pl service. I have classified them according to three key criteria: speech acts, rhetorical devices and linguistic devices. In doing so, I have relied not only on the speech act / strategic approach, but also on the Gricean concept of implicature. I also included a self-politeness framework presented in Chen (2001) to show that being polite to ourselves can at the same time mean being impolite to other. By being self-polite, Allegro sellers try to deny and contradict their opponent, as well as offending and ridiculing them. At this point, another proportionate relationship can be noticed: ‘the more self-polite I (i.e. the seller) am, the more degraded you (i.e. the buyer) will be’ which, importantly, means also degradation in the eyes of the readers, prospective sellers and members of the Allegro community in general.

In such exchanges, the sellers frequently strive to save and maintain their professional face, which I understand as a specific face dimension linked to one’s competence, reliability and good reputation as a professional (here, a business person). This notion will be elaborated on in the last chapter.

Figure 2. Strategies used in the data – summary / statistics

Name of the group of strategies	Names of specific strategies	Incidence in the data
I. Speech acts	1. Negate other 2. Criticise other: 2.1.Criticisms issued by buyers:	96

	2.1.1. Criticise the seller	70
	2.1.2. Criticise the goods	198
	2.1.3. Criticise the service	529
	2.2. Criticisms issued by sellers	131
	3. Insult other	72
	4. Accuse other	191
	4.1. 'Hurting third parties'	21
	4.2. Disclose other's motives	46
	5. Ridicule other	94
	6. Degrade other	3
	7. Patronize other	147
	8. Challenge other	11
	9. Warn against other	24
	10. Threaten other	4
II. Rhetorical devices	1. Self-politeness as impoliteness (general)	124
	1.1.Quote the number of positive comments you have already gained	6
	1.2.Remind the other about your good reputation	18
	1.3.Quote your shop's terms and conditions	28
	2. Repeat or paraphrase what the other has said	29
	3. Sarcasm	143
	4. Ask a rhetorical question	93
	5. Question the other's reputation	596
	6. 'No-comment' strategy	15
III. Linguistic means	1. Modify the spelling convention	
	1.1. Use capital letters	
	1.1.1. Capitalise every word in a sentence	1
	1.1.2.Use capital letters when not expected	5



	1.1.3. Use block capitals	307
	1.2. Use a lower case letter instead of a capital letter	2
	2. Use inverted commas	13
	3. Do not use spacing	2
	4. Litotes	6
	5. Antiphrasis	5
	6. Use inappropriate identity markers	32
	7. Use a proverb, a saying or a general truth	59
	7.1. Use a mock-general truth	8
	8. Address the audience or other parties	42
	9. Avoid the agent	319

## CHAPTER IV

### DATA ANALYSIS: RESULTS

#### 1. Introduction

The aims of this chapter are: first to test the major impoliteness theories mentioned in chapter 1 of this thesis against the data and see how the basic tenets and assumptions of those theories look when confronted with the Allegro.pl exchanges. In my doing so, I am going to recall the basic tenets of those theories and then compare each of them with the outcome of my data analysis. The second objective is to focus on a face aspect which my data reveals, namely *professional face*, compare it with previous crucial studies on face and propose its definition.

#### 2. The data and major (im)politeness theories

##### 2.1. Lachenicht (1980)

Among Lachenicht's many claims on impoliteness (or rather, as he puts it, aggravating language), there is a distinction between two key types of aggravation: positive, which reads: 'convey a message that X is not liked or accepted' and negative, which posits that the speaker should 'interfere with X's freedom of action.' In my data, aggravation can be observed without any doubt. However, a problem arises at this point: this aggravation is rather mixed and not clear-cut, so it would be hard to single out its positive or negative aspect. As a result, two conclusions could be suggested. The first one would be that aggravation in my data is positive and negative at the same time, so there is definitely some continuum (cf. examples XXV/5, XXVI/9, XXXIV/150 in the appendix, to name but a few). The second one would argue for a slightly different understanding of face, which the author does not mention. It is partly connected with the positive vs. negative dichotomy, but it also highlights some other face aspect: the professional face of the shop's users, specifically of the sellers.

Another observation the author makes is connected with one of his four superstrategies: the 'Off-record' one, which applies when dealing with powerful addressees.<sup>30</sup> As 'off-record' entails indirectness, then it logically follows that, for Lachenicht, indirectness is advisable when the addressee has more power than we do. Nevertheless, this particular finding is not likely to work for my data. In fact, it appears that in Allegro.pl exchanges power relationships between the interactants, i.e. the buyer and the seller, are equal, as they are both partners and parties in a transaction. Likewise, social distance that holds between them is not really relevant to their communication and, I dare say, rather negligible. As a result, indirectness in the data does not necessarily stem from deference; it is rather a result of a genuine intention of damaging other's face.

To summarise then, Lachenicht (1980) puts forward a division between positive and begative aggravation, which does not really match my data; moreover, his claims about the indirectness-power link do not seem to be relevant for my considerations.

## **2.2. Culpeper (1996, 2005), Culpeper et al. (2003)**

According to Culpeper (1996), the key motivations for impoliteness are: first, promoting social disharmony, disequilibrium in cooperation and conversation, and second, attacking the hearer's face. Compared with my data, these observations prove apt and right: Allegro.pl buyers post impolite negative comments and the sellers retaliate with even more impolite responses precisely for this reason: to hurt other's face (both buyers and sellers) as well as defend their own (rather sellers, but at times also buyers). This is visible in, for instance, the following exchanges: X/3, XI/2, XXI/1.

In Culpeper et al. (2003), the author examines prosody and intonation and their contribution to impolite effects. As important as this correlation is, it does not really match my data in its original form, because it applies to spoken communication, not relevant to the internet context. However, in lieu of prosody and intonation Allegro.pl users can resort to other means at their disposal to intentionally offend the opponents: the spelling convention. As has been mentioned before, the deliberate use of block capitals (which, in Netiquette, equals shouting) or lower case letters in place of capital letters (which is a sign of disrespect)

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<sup>30</sup> Tannen (2000), who discusses indirectness in American workplaces (especially managers) from a sociolinguistic point of view, presents a slightly different view: she opines that indirectness need not go hand in hand with weakness and uncertainty. She believes it to be closely related to power, but in a different way: the more power one has, the more freedom he has to choose between directness and indirectness, so for the more powerful it is an option, not a necessity (as it is for participants of lower status).

could be interpreted as a variation of Culpeper's claim, which has been adapted to the internet context (cf. examples XXX/22c, XXXI/13, XXXII/9b, XXXII/17a, XXXIV/101). Such decisions can be viewed as the authors' conscious choice to hurt the opponents.

Culpeper (2005: 44) makes one crucial claim regarding off-record impoliteness (understood as a consequence of flouting a maxim): "the FTA is performed by means of an implicature but in such a way that one attributable intention clearly outweighs any others." This observation proves to be true for my data, especially when we consider strategy 5.3.5., i.e. 'Question the other's reputation.' In fact, there has to be an initial intention to accuse other and present them in a negative light (cf. examples XXIV/6, XXX/6d). This in turn gives rise to a motivation for indirectness in the negative feedback.

He adds that "these more indirect forms of impoliteness, such as off-record impoliteness, should not be considered any less impolite than more direct forms. In fact, (...) there are theoretical grounds for believing it to work in the opposite direction, namely, that more indirect forms of impoliteness are more offensive" (ibid.). After confronting these remarks on indirect impoliteness with my data, we see that not only are they true, but also of crucial importance to my understanding of impoliteness as such. When it is communicated off-record, impoliteness seems to be even more offensive than when on-record. Many exchanges contain a mixture of direct and indirect impoliteness, e.g. a direct insult right next to an indirect one, the latter being more face-damaging than the former (cf. example XXXI/10, XXXIV/1).

Later (Culpeper 2010) the author draws attention to conventionalized impoliteness formulae; however, it is hard to detect their presence in my data. The participants apply a very wide repertoire of impolite expressions which do not seem to comply with any particular convention (examples XXXIII/26, XXXIV/36b, XXXIV/44).

To recapitulate then, Culpeper's model seems to match my data quite successfully and provides a clear explanation of strategies in the data, as well as intentionality and motivations behind the negative feedback; as one of the pioneers in impoliteness studies he devised a model which works here.

### **2.3. Bousfield (2008)**

Similarly to Culpeper, Bousfield (2008) also associates impoliteness with disharmony, or, more specifically, with constructing the hearer's face in a non-harmonious way, as well as attacking and denying the hearer's expected face wants. This perception of impoliteness works very well with my data, as has been pointed out before. Another observation Bousfield makes is that face is enhanced, challenged and damaged in interactional dyads throughout the exchange. Apart from that, it is also expected by Self but interactionally constituted between Self and Other. This also proves right when juxtaposed with my data, as face can be defined here as quite a dynamic concept, which is being damaged and defended at the same time (examples: XXVI/8, XXXII/28, XXXIII/27). He understands off-record impoliteness similarly to Culpeper (2005), which seems to be in line with my data analysis.

I could see only one drawback of Bousfield's model: it centres upon a data-based study wherein the data come from a reality show. Given that such shows are known to be, by and large, 'staged' and rehearsed, this could arouse doubts regarding the spontaneity of interaction studied by the author. The data in *Allegro.pl* altercations seems to have been produced rather spontaneously and have a special 'spoken' quality about them (cf. section 3.4. on spoken vs. written discourse).

#### **2.4. Escandell - Vidal (1996, 1998)**

Escandell-Vidal's Relevance Theory-based model of politeness is, as Wiechecka (2010b) notes, quite able to accommodate impoliteness as well, since both politeness and impoliteness mechanisms would work in a parallel fashion.

For Escandell-Vidal, defining an utterance as either polite or impolite requires using some assumptions, which are later on indispensable for constructing higher-level explicatures. The impolite effect is attributed to an overt mismatch between expectations and the actual linguistic behaviour, which we can explain thanks to the presumption of optimal relevance. This particular tenet works quite well for my data analysis. So does the fact that Escandell-Vidal, a Relevance Theorist, casts doubt on the iconic politeness and indirectness link, well-entrenched in politeness theories e.g. by Leech (1983) or Brown and Levinson (1987). However, she makes no explicit mention of indirect impoliteness in her model, since indirectness as such is not an issue in Relevance Theory; it rather constitutes its very core. Moreover, she fails to enumerate specific linguistic means to achieve the aim of hurting the addressee and explain intentionality in greater detail.

Another important claim Escandell-Vidal puts forward is acknowledging the system of frames. Here, she builds upon Tannen's (1993) understanding of frames as specific, structured and culturally determined sets of assumptions.<sup>31</sup> These frames, according to Escandell-Vidal, result from particular, specific knowledge, and they are used in order to make certain assumptions accessible, which then produces a ready-made context and facilitates the understanding of a situation or an utterance. This reading of frames also proves true for my data, as in fact one might perceive Allegro.pl comments section as a fully-fledged frame in its own right. Moreover, maybe it could be postulated that there exists a separate frame for 'buying online.' One vital part of this frame would be expressing polite beliefs, which includes: thanking for a good transaction, complimenting or praising the partner, recommendation of their services etc. Another one could be expressing impoliteness after an unsuccessful deal by: criticizing the transaction, the items etc., accusing the partner of dishonesty, warning others against them and so on.

To sum up then, Escandell-Vidal's understanding of frames is very helpful when applied to my data; still, the author does not discuss the problems of intention or linguistic strategies used in producing an impolite message.

## **2.5. Jary (1998)**

According to Jary (1998), an (im)polite effect comes about as a result of a change in the cognitive environment that exists between the speaker and the hearer, which in turn generates a mismatch between the words uttered and what the speaker had previously believed to be mutually manifest. Apart from that, our selection of an appropriate linguistic form or a strategy is, as the author claims, governed by our assumptions about our relationship with the hearer and the variables discussed in Brown and Levinson (1987): power, distance and finally the weightiness of a speech act.

Unfortunately, when we juxtapose these observations with my data, we come across an obstacle which also appears in my discussion of Lachenicht's analysis: it is quite difficult to properly establish the kind of relationship between the seller and the buyer in the on-line context. It seems that there is some kind of relationship, but, in my view, probably a strictly business one (it involves professional face). What is more, if a transaction goes wrong, the encounter between the buyer and the seller is usually one-off and is not repeated again,

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. encyclopaedic entries associated with a concept (Sperber and Wilson, 1986: 87-88) or the notion of a scenario (Wilson 1993).

unless both parties have reached an understanding and made amends. That said, my data complies with Jary's reading of (im)politeness in one important respect: the choice of form and strategy in the exchanges is of crucial importance.

By and large, Jary's insight into the importance of forms and strategies might be viewed as useful for my data analysis; however, his observations about the relationship between the participants do not seem to match the data.

## 2.6. Watts (2003)

Watts rejects the belief in inherent (im)politeness, which happens to be true for my data analysis: seemingly polite expressions are used to convey a very impolite, face-damaging effect (cf. example XXXI/10). Moreover, he criticizes Grice and the CP, supporting RT instead, which probably explains why he does not make a claim about the importance of the conversational implicature as such.

He also favours, and discusses in detail, the notion of EPMs, or expressions of procedural meaning, which trigger inferences in the addressee that in turn bear on the interpersonal meaning. As he elaborates, "addressees must assume that what their interlocutors have just uttered is meant to be interpreted as maximally relevant to the context of the social interaction" (2003: 191). The EPMs form part of politeness behaviour and can be formulaic or semi-formulaic, which is quite analogous to Searle's (1975) direct versus indirect speech acts. Furthermore, interestingly, their absence marks impoliteness, but at the same time there is nothing in the structure of semi-formulaic EPMs that is intrinsically polite. Our interpretation of them as 'politeness expressions' stems from the context, along with prosody and intonation (if the last two are at our disposal).

If we take Watts' assumption as read, then the EPMs in my data could be easily interpreted as genuinely impolite given the context of a negative comment. This seems to align with my data successfully, especially when considering examples like: XXI/1 or XXX/16, which do employ expressions commonly understood as polite (*Miło, że...*, and *W ramach prezentu świątecznego dla Państwa...* respectively), but also include an antiphrasis (*Miło że się nie skontaktowałeś przed wystawieniem komentarza* and *W ramach prezentu świątecznego dla Państwa wystawiam negatywny komentarz*, respectively). Another example, XXXI/10, starts with a very polite address from and honorific *Droga Panno*, but its continuation is highly impolite. This leads me to believe that EPMs are the most useful

aspect of Watts's model; however, they are not numerous in my data, so they cannot account for all the examples.

## **2.7. Meakins (2001)**

The way Meakins (2001) models impoliteness is a combination of, or some middle ground between, Relevance Theory and a Speech Acts-based approach, as a lot of emphasis is given to strategies. Impoliteness is, in short, a final product of a sequence made of several stages: first, intention, then some form of marked behaviour and finally an ostension contributor that produces a given strategy. She remarks that there are two factors that the context makes manifest: the speaker's intention and the hearer's recognition of the implicature. One problem that could be found in this approach is that Meakins's study, like that by Bousfield (2008) is data-based; therefore, if her findings are based on solely one instance of interaction could lead to a somewhat *distorted* picture, or understanding of impoliteness. On the whole, however, her approach turns out to be quite useful and favourable for my data, as it comprises a very detailed discussion of implicatures and their classification according to tactics, strategies and the largest category of all, superstrategies.

## **2.8. Terkourafi (2008)**

In her model, based upon Brown and Levinson and the theory of the *habitus* (Bourdieu 1990), Terkourafi (2008: 69-70) enumerates five types of face-constituting or face-threatening behaviour: unmarked politeness, unmarked rudeness, marked politeness, marked rudeness and finally impoliteness. One face-threatening activity from her framework, i.e. that of marked rudeness (or rudeness proper), seems to align with impoliteness in my data. In rudeness, the expression used is not conventionalised relative to the context of occurrence. The mechanism here is as follows: first, the addressee recognises the speaker's face-threatening intention, then marked rudeness threatens the addressee's face, and through that, it also threatens the speaker's face in the addressee's eyes. As a possible side-effect, rudeness may also constitute the speaker's face in the eyes of another participant, including the speaker him/herself. This last claim is very much in line with Bousfield's (2008) findings on that subject. It also corresponds with what happens in Allegro.pl exchanges, where many impolite replies produced by the sellers also display self-politeness (e.g. exchanges: XV/3, XVII/1, XXX/19), where the sellers constitute their face and convey impolite implicatures about the buyers. Additionally, Terkourafi maintains that when over-



politeness leads to rudeness proper, it threatens the speaker's face. If we understand over-politeness as indirect impoliteness, it could also be quite helpful for my analysis, as there are numerous examples of such behaviour in the data (example XXVII/14a).

Like several other authors, Terkourafi also stresses the importance of two factors: intentionality and attributing intention to the speaker, which happens to match the data. On the other hand, she does not specify how indirectness could be a special choice in expressing this intention, especially if the speaker intends to damage his opponent's face.

## **2.9. Locher (2004), Locher and Watts (2008)**

Locher and Watts analyse impoliteness from the perspective of politic behavior, relational work, social practice and norms and lastly, frames of expectations (Tannen 1993, Escandell-Vidal 1996). Their innovative theory (as they call it, a discursive approach) is quite useful and some of its tenets correspond well to my data, like the belief that impoliteness is not inherent in linguistic expressions. In addition, Locher and Watts also argue that, confronted with relational work, the hearer has four options of labelling it, namely: (a): impolite (inappropriate/non-politic and negatively marked) (b): non-polite (appropriate / politic and unmarked), (c): polite (appropriate/politic and positively marked) and finally (d): over-polite (inappropriate/non-politic and negatively marked) (Locher and Watts 2008: 79, after Watts (2005)). For my considerations, the most important is the (a) judgement 'impolite,' i.e. inappropriate (or non-politic) and negatively marked, combined, according to the authors, with an emotional, forceful reaction. This is particularly true for Allegro.pl users, who often display a lot of emotions in their quarrels, which is reflected in e.g. their manipulating Polish spelling convention (block capitals, using lower case letters instead of capitals) and punctuation (e.g. multiple exclamation marks), ignoring spelling conventions (incidental mistakes) or lexical choices (very offensive epithets and/or insinuations).

On the other hand, the way Locher and Watts perceive relational work is not wholly compatible with my data. As has been mentioned above, I find it problematic to properly label and then characterize the relationship between the buyer and the seller in online shops. If there is any relationship to speak of, it is rather a business one. Moreover, in many cases it is also short-lived, because there is only one transaction. If it is unsuccessful, then it is simply not repeated; on the other hand, if it is successful (which is not discussed in my data),

it also could be one-off, because the buyer has purchased one item and he does not need anything more from a given seller.

Next, the authors tackle the problem of power and impoliteness in interaction. Power, according to them, has a crucial role: it is constantly negotiated, updated, adjusted and then renegotiated in ongoing interaction. Moreover, in social practice power is exercised hand in hand with impoliteness (cf. also Watts 2003). This could be relevant for my data if we perceived the Allegro.pl altercations as a struggle for power. However, as with Lachenicht's model, I do not think power is an issue here, as both the buyer and the seller have the same status. I would imagine the exchanges as a struggle for not exactly power, but rather moral victory or defeating the opponent.

The next problematic area in this model is no explicit mention of indirectness as a special choice in expressing impoliteness. Locher (2004) undoubtedly does discuss some strategies for politeness expressions but, unfortunately, she does not emphasize indirectness there. The last slight problem with Locher and Watts's taxonomy is that they use the term *implications* instead of *implicatures*.

## **2.10. Conclusions**

Taking all those models into consideration, I would evaluate the models by Culpeper (1996, 2003, 2005), Bousfield (2008) and Meakins (2001) as the most useful for the data. The understanding of face in Bousfield (2008) and Meakins (2001) seems to be more fluid than e.g. Lachenicht's (1980) and the dynamics of impolite interaction is presented very successfully, especially in Bousfield (2008).

Other models, which I find highly useful but not fully compatible with the Allegro.pl exchanges, are those by: Escandell-Vidal (1996, 1998) for her definition of frames and Jary (1998) for the emphasis on choosing the form and the strategy. The other author would be Watts (2003) for introducing formulaic and semi-formulaic expression of procedural meaning and his view on face as a fluid, dynamic concept that develops all the time in social practice. The model suggested by Locher (2004) and Locher and Watts (2008) is also helpful due to their definition of impolite behaviour, which includes the affective factor.

These models, while enlightening and invaluable, do not fully comply with the data because two of them (Jary 1998, Locher and Watts 2008) assume the existence of a relationship between the interactants, which I do not think a relevant factor for my analysis.

Escandell-Vidal (1996, 1998) does not focus on intentional face damage; Watts fails to list specific strategies that threaten the opponent's face.

The model which I do not really find compatible with my data would be that proposed by Lachenicht (1980) mainly because his understanding of indirectness (labelled 'off-record' superstrategy) as a way of handling conflicts with more powerful opponents does not account for the motives behind indirectness in the data set.

### **3. On professional face**

The data in my collection reveal one important feature that could be relevant to impoliteness and indirectness considerations. They accentuate an aspect of face that, as it is tentatively proposed later, could be labelled 'professional face.' It refers to a particular professional identity that Allegro.pl users display in their exchanges, focused on personal competence and performance at work or when doing business (as for many Allegro.pl sellers their shop constitutes a source of income). First, however, I intend to recall the most important and relevant statements, definitions and findings on face and facework in literature. Then I set out to examine how the professional aspect of facework has been defined and justified in pragmatics and social studies. Lastly, I put forward my understanding of professional face, which is derived from both the theoretical considerations and my data characteristics.

Goffman (1955, 1967) is and will be remembered and credited as the author of the first discussion and description of the term 'face' in sociology. His definition (1967: 5) assumes that face is "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact," as well as being "delineated in terms of approved social attributes" (ibid.). Moreover, face is "diffusely located in the flow of events" (1967: 7) and is quite vulnerable and fragile (1967: 6). His research concerns interaction and societal roles and captures the differences in private vs. public behaviour of an individual.

Brown and Levinson (1987), who build upon Goffman's findings in their positive vs. negative face distinction, have on numerous occasions been accused of providing insufficient insight into non-European cultures and being one-sided. These criticisms have been voiced by many scholars (e.g. Wierzbicka 1991, Matsumoto 1989, Ide 1989, Eelen

2001, Watts 2003). Ruhi (2006: 44) offers a very useful classification of criticisms of Brown and Levinson's theory, which she has divided into six groups:

"(a) Anglo-Saxon bias in defining (aspects of) face (e.g., Wierzbicka 1991); (b) ambivalence of the politeness strategies regarding the kind of face that these attend to and the inconsistencies between studies that employ the model (e.g., Meier 1995); (c) description of nearly all speech acts as face-threatening and the related idea that politeness functions primarily to redress face threat (e.g., Kasper 1990); (d) focus on hearer-oriented politeness at the expense of the speaker (e.g., Chen 2001); (e) bias in the model towards of the polite end of the continuum in interaction (e.g., Culpeper 1996); and (f) little attention it devotes to the socio-psychological context in communication (e.g., Fraser 1990; Eelen 2001)".

### **3.1. Attempts to define professional face**

In the literature on politeness and facework to date there have been notable attempts at capturing those aspects of an individual's face that are related to their professionalism, capabilities or skills and are not discussed by Brown and Levinson. To illustrate, Locher (2004: 218) acknowledges the existence of a different face dimension in the professional context: "[p]eople engaged in workplace interaction can be said to wear a different face, enacting a different role than in a private, family setting or, indeed, any other context." Also, Hatipoğlu (2007: 771), whose study is conducted within the Community of Practice framework,<sup>32</sup> defines a human's identity as "a nexus of memberships [which – A.W.] is constantly renegotiated," adding that "[o]ur professional and cultural identities form trajectories that interact with and affect each other" (ibid.).

Crucially, Lim and Bowers (1991) suggest, among other ideas, a division of positive face into two parts, Fellowship Face and Competence Face. The former corresponds to "the want to be included, which is supported by understanding, affection and solidarity" (1991: 420) and the latter, which is of our interest here, is closely linked to "the want that one's abilities be respected, which is supported by positive evaluation and recognition and threatened by criticism" (ibid.). The authors argue that Competence Face is connected with our need for respect, which stems from "esteem needs" (Maslow 1943), i.e. our wish to be valued by others for our abilities and status, as well as the "need for control" (Schutz 1971). Competence could refer to "intelligence, appearance and general ability to cope with the world" (Lim and Bowers 1991: 420). This particular finding is quite crucial for my analysis and reading of face, as will be demonstrated later.

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<sup>32</sup> Cf. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) and Wenger (1998) and their definitions of Communities of Practice.

Tannen (2000) does not really mention any face aspect related to professional life, but does make an important claim regarding one particular way of talking among American managers and their deliberate choice of indirect strategies, which could signal the existence of such a face dimension to appear in literature on facework, since some specific strategies are expectable in some given workplace situations.

Meakins (2001) accuses Brown and Levinson's approach of being reductionist and of neglecting the speaker's face and focusing too much on the hearer's face, especially in the case of rudeness. As she notes, "[s]uch behaviour would do little for his/her need to be liked and appreciated, though it might have a positive effect on S's negative face" (Meakins 2001: 51). She perceives face as a jointly constructed endeavour, created by S and H in its presentation and perception (the essence of Sperber and Wilson's ostensive-inferential communication), their mutual cognitive environment (Meakins 2001: 59). Within her Relevance Theory based model of impoliteness, Meakins acknowledges the understanding of face presented in Lim and Bowers (1991) and takes it one step further by proposing her own subdivisions within the very concept of face, i.e. three subtypes in every face aspect. Those subtypes are: Individual Face, Relationship Face and finally Social Face, all of them belonging to the immediate context. The contextual effects that arise in conversation are likewise classified into Individual, Relationship and Social contextual effects (Meakins 2001: 61). The face information is said to be fluid and dynamic (Meakins 2001: 58), and, as she observes, "interactants who exist in variable contexts present different faces to address these situations. The addressee perceives this to be so, and thus the mutual cognitive environment is constructed and changes according to the information added into the interaction" (Meakins 2001: 58-59). However, unfortunately, she only sketches some of the possible connections of her understanding of face with one's professional competence when discussing Relationship Face and Social Face (both in theoretical considerations and data analysis) and does not discuss this issue in more detail.

Spencer-Oatey (2000) accuses Brown and Levinson's theory of ignoring the social perspective of interaction and analyzes face and politeness from the point of view of rapport management. Within this model, she suggests yet another face division: into Quality Face, i.e. the desire to be evaluated positively as regards "personal qualities, e.g. competence, abilities, appearance" (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 14) and Identity Face, i.e. "fundamental desire for people to acknowledge our social identities or roles, e.g. as group leader, valued customer, close friend (...) concerned with the value that we effectively claim for ourselves

in terms of social or group roles, and is closely associated with our sense of public worth" (ibid.). Another finding is drawing attention to a person's sociality rights, i.e. equity rights and association rights. The rapport management approach, as she argues (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 15), is more useful than Brown and Levinson's, as it embraces a social perspective of relationship management and differentiates between face needs and sociality rights, or "includes the management of sociality rights as well as of face" (Spencer-Oatey 2000: 12).<sup>33</sup>

As Cashman (2006: 241, 2008: 258) observes, attacking one's work performance would be an impoliteness strategy aimed at the Quality Face, while Social Identity Face is attacked when we are condescended, scorned or ridiculed. Role Identity Face is not included in this discussion. Cashman does not mention overlapping of these two types of face. However, it could be postulated that these two categories need not be treated in a clear-cut manner and they could be viewed as fluid or as a continuum, as Bousfield (2008) notes on Brown and Levinson's face dichotomy.

Bravo (1999, 2002, 2008) proposes the concept of socio-cultural face, which changes into role face, composed of two parts: individual face and group face.<sup>34</sup> Each of them is then further divided into autonomy and affiliation 'sub-faces' or subcategories. Bravo's model is convincing and quite practical: it assumes the existence of 'empty' categories filled in by values relevant to a given community. Moreover, as Hernández-Flores (2008: 693-694) notes, it does not impose any social meaning or rigid communicative strategies which strive to be universal: "autonomy and affiliation deal with probably universal human needs that only refer to the person as someone separated from his/her group and to the person as related to his/her group" (ibid.). Nevertheless, Bravo does not make any explicit mention of face in the professional context. If we analysed the data within this framework, we might assume that personal competence might be situated somewhere in between individual face and group face: the sellers of Allegro.pl do business as individuals and have their own respectability and dignity, but also belong to a group. That would entail a continuum between those two notions, but unfortunately Bravo does not openly state whether reading her face model as a continuum is possible at all.

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<sup>33</sup> Later on (Spencer-Oatey 2002: 540-542), the author replaces Identity Face with two notions: Social Identity Face, and Role Identity Face, whose definitions and applications are the same as in the previous paper.

<sup>34</sup> She also mentions the term *basic face*, understood as "a set of socio-cultural contents or a configuration of a socially accepted face that is supposed to be known by the members of a given speech community" (Bravo 2008: 588, cf. also Bravo 1993, 1996, Hernández-Flores 1999, 2002, 2003).

### 3.2. Professional face and the data

If we were to analyse Allegro.pl exchanges from the point of view of face and facework, one observation springs to mind. Allegro.pl users are in a rather specific situation: in the altercations, elements of both positive and negative face are involved. Consequently, they are also involved in the maintenance of professional face. This finding corresponds to Bousfield (2008), who observes that overlapping of the two face aspects is highly possible and posits a continuum whose extremes would be positive and negative impoliteness. Here, however, a different face aspect is at play; it resides in between wishing to belong in a group (from which one could be eliminated for dishonest practices, after being denounced on or complaints filed against them) and at the same time keeping one's reputation high. Allegro.pl users (especially the sellers) form a community of professionals.

For those who sell on Allegro.pl, the number, or percentage, of positive comments in their feedback (easily accessible for any client from their Allegro.pl user profile) is of crucial importance in terms of being professional, reliable and serious. Positive feedback studied on any seller's profile may potentially make people buy things from them or recommend their services after a successful transaction. Neutral or negative feedback, in turn, may discourage prospective clients from doing any business with them in the future. Finally, neutral feedback is not meant to be offensive but sellers still dislike it, as it often suggests that the services/goods etc. are rather unexceptional.<sup>35</sup>

In light of all these observations, it seems that Lim and Bowers (1991: 420) are the closest to my understanding of face in a professional context. In fact, Allegro.pl users are members of the same community. Consequently, they share the idea of in-groupedness and tend to highlight and enhance this face aspect in their transactions. At the same time, their good image and reputation as individuals need to be maintained as they make a living from selling online. Therefore, in such interactions their Competence Face is at stake.

At this point, I would suggest one modification of the very concept of Competence Face. For an online shop user, especially a seller, the most important aspect of their competence is their being professional and reliable. Handling not only sales, but also

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<sup>35</sup> Similar observations might obviously be applicable for users of other online shops/ auctioning services, e.g. eBay, Amazon etc. The rules are comparable or the same, identities, obligations and interaction work in a similar fashion.

possible problems with delivery, customer complaints, customer retention or satisfaction are all elements of a truly professional sales service. This aspect of communication needs a special face dimension or type, which a) tackles all such interactions and b) is at stake in impolite exchanges. It is in a way independent both positive and negative face, but also connected with both of them. It could be therefore tentatively proposed that, within the notion of Competence Face, we can distinguish one its subtype called *the professional face*, understood as the professional competence of an individual – in other words, this individual's reputation, trustworthiness, high standards of service etc. Obviously, this face dimension refers only to job-related, or business-related, communicative situations. As with other face aspects (Brown and Levinson's positive vs. negative face, Bravo's autonomy vs. affiliation face or Spencer-Oatey's Social Face vs. Quality Face), it can be enhanced, attacked or threatened. Attacking one's professional face might lead to professional face loss, which entails the loss of our reputation, good opinion and credibility as a business person.



## CONCLUSIONS

In this dissertation, I attempted to find an impoliteness framework within the existing literature that would provide the best explanation of the linguistic behaviour in conflictive exchanges between users of Allegro.pl, an online shop. In achieving this aim, I first summarised the major politeness and impoliteness models in Chapter I, paying attention not only to their core understanding of the term, but also to face and intentionality. I also provided a very brief and selective overview of the most influential theories concerning discourse analysis in Chapter II and justified the status of the data as a piece of discourse. In the same chapter, I recalled the key views on indirectness and selected one that would align with the data. In Chapter III, I analysed the impoliteness strategies observable in the data, offering their classification and, pointed out their richness and complexity, as well as the multiplicity of ways in which indirect impoliteness can be implicated, showing that many strategies combine and reinforce the impolite effect. A chart with statistics is provided which includes the incidence of the strategies. In Chapter IV, I proceeded to a critical evaluation of the most crucial impoliteness models and discussed the specific nature of face in the conflictive exchanges, which involves a professional identity of an online seller, as well as some characteristics of both positive and negative face.

A detailed analysis of the the models of impoliteness in literature to date leads to the conclusion that the frameworks which best correspond to the data and best explain indirect impoliteness therein are those proposed by Bousfield (2008), Culpeper (1996, 2005), Culpeper et al. (2003) and finally Meakins (2001). The first two operate within the Gricean approach to utterance understanding and here, the approach by Bousfield (2008) is more flexible and functional as regards the understanding of face; on the other hand, Culpeper's (2005) insight into intentionality and the nature of implicated impoliteness (more face-damaging and harmful than its direct counterpart) cannot be overestimated. The third model, by Meakins (2001), is Relevance-Theoretic, but even though the Gricean approach has been chosen as more adequate in analyzing indirectness in the data than Relevance Theory, the author nevertheless does include a convincing account of strategies in conveying impoliteness and a reliable taxonomy of implicatures.

Finally, it has been proposed that a term 'professional face,' viewed as an elaboration on, or a subcategory within, the notion of Competence Face (Lim and Bowers 1991), should

be included when considering face in business encounters. This suggestion is a result of the fact that this very face aspect seems to be attacked in every exchange in the data set. It could be postulated that the motivation behind such attacks is the intention to put in doubt the seller's reputation and damage his good name in the community of the Allegro.pl users and to damage their professional face.

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